

**THE ANTI-SECULAR INTERRELIGIOUS PERFORMANCE
AND THE WESTERN CHALLENGE IN
THE PARLIAMENT OF THE WORLD'S RELIGIONS:
“NO WORLD PEACE
WITHOUT DIALOGUE WITHIN THE RELIGIONS”**

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FOREWORD

To establish positive relations it is necessary for people to stop demonizing strangers, immigrants, and those who are religiously different, who appear to many of them to be monstrous (Marty 2005:4).

From the very beginning of the master program I knew I wanted to write about the positive contributions religions give in today's society. There is already considerable focus on religious terrorism, religious violence and religious fundamentalism. These days it seems as there is not much else in the media at all. However, there is also another side of the picture often overlooked. So that was what I wanted to write about: How people of different faiths together use their religious inspirations to ease the world's sufferings and problems.

For the subject and purpose of this thesis to have any meaning, it is important to make clear that the perspective for this thesis is not objective and value-free in the sense of all religious expressions being regarded as equally justifiable, whether the results are violent or peaceful. I will base my thesis and analysis on the point of view that peace, reconciliation, justice, preservation of the environment and respect for human rights are undeniable goals in themselves. In addressing these questions it is impossible to maintain a detached position as an 'objective' researcher, and even though I will try not to draw any biased conclusions on how to achieve these goals, the values behind my choice of subject can not be ignored. The thesis is written from a critically engaged concern over the events taking place today. Religions are to a large extent motivating factors in the conflicts and human rights-violations taking place in the world. But there is also considerable potential in religions to work against these forces.

I do not assume that the conclusions in this thesis will be final. It is hard to analyse the contemporary turmoils one is standing in the midst of without the benefit of using the lenses of a full historical context. But I hope I may be able to make a contribution to the debate regarding what is going on in today's society which others can use later.

There are several people I would like to thank. The most important are: Jens Braarvig, my supervisor, for having given me guidance and advices through the whole process; the people in the *Council of the Parliament of the World's Religions* for taking the time to answer questions, reply to e-mails and send Program books and other documents; Sharon McCaw for assisting me with the English language; and last, but not least, Michael Slaby, for the

assistance with the interviews in Barcelona, and the useful exchange of information, points of views and materials afterwards.

As a closing remark to the foreword I want to quote William Hart's explanation to his readers, on how to understand the content of his book, slightly changed to make the passage fit this thesis:

My interpretation of the [Parliament of the World's Religions] is an "excessive" act; it exceeds what is explicitly evident in [the Parliament programs]. It runs [...] ahead of the evidence, but only slightly ahead, in the manner of a hypothesis. Thus I read [the Parliament] against the grain, idiosyncratically, by accenting the religious – secular problematic underlying the [material] by pushing, stretching, and, perhaps, overinterpreting in that direction. I find significance where others might not. I discern, loosely speaking, a "grammar of motives" underneath [the Parliament's] use of religious and secular language. Thus I do not regard [the] language as merely a curiosity or a rhetorical flourish. Such an approach cannot help but have a certain quality of exaggeration [...]. I think that this approach illuminates [the Parliament]. The ultimate judgment – whether my excesses illuminate or darken the picture that would otherwise be clear – is for the reader to make. This is how I read [the Parliament] (Hart 2000:x).

ABBREVIATIONS

CPWR	Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions
DTGE	Declaration Toward a Global Ethic
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
IARF	International Association for Religious Freedom
IIC	International Interfaith Centre
IICJ	International Council of Christians and Jews
IIOCC	International Interfaith Organisations Co-ordinating Committee
IFYC	Interfaith Youth Core
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NIIO	Network of International Interfaith Organisations
SFUN	Project toward a Spiritual Forum for World Peace at the United Nation
ToU	Temple of Understanding
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
URI	United Religions Initiative
WCC	World Council of Churches
WCF	World Congress of Faiths
WCRL	World Council of Religious and Spiritual Leaders
WCRP	World Conference of Religion and Peace

INTRODUCTION

No world peace without peace between religions. No peace between religions without dialogue between the religions (Küng 1991:xv).

Subject and approach

The subject of my thesis is how interreligious dialogues and cooperation can be examined from a sociological point of view. In sociology of religion today, most scholars agree that the secularisation-paradigm is declining, and that religions now are trying to gain more influence in society than what has earlier been granted them (Casanova 1994:11). To obtain a higher status in the international systems which are more or less critical to religion as a whole, it is therefore in the interest of the various religious traditions to cooperate and appear as a united system which has considerable positive resources to offer. Interreligious dialogues and cooperation can therefore be used as an anti-secular strategy. There is today a great number of interreligious social agencies, institutions and organisations that work to improve the world through projects in developing countries, fight against violations of human rights, and focus on environmental issues. As positive as these engagements are, I still want to ask if that is all there is to it. Against the background of the secular international society where religion to a large degree is without real influence on the decision-making arena, it is very likely that these socially engaged activities may be used as one way for religion to once again become a power to reckon with.

In this thesis I want to examine how religious adherents, on the basis of a common concern for humanitarian and ecological matters, can cooperate in an anti-secular agenda through an interreligious movement. One of the main points in this examination is to show how the partners engaged in these collaborations first and foremost are of the 'liberal' wings, and how these interreligious collaborations lack the participation of the 'conservative' wings. This absence shows the *intrareligious* differences. As a result, it is precisely the intrareligious dialogues which may constitute the greatest challenge in the pursuit of anti-secular goals.

To discuss these issues I have chosen to focus on the *Parliament of the World's Religions* (I will refer to it only as the 'Parliament'¹). The Parliaments have been organised four times so far in history. The first Parliament took place in 1893, but I will concentrate on those held 1993, 1999 and 2004. The events in 1893 and 1993 were held in Chicago, the one in 1999 was

¹ I will use 'Parliament' when I talk about the separate gatherings and the gatherings in general, and 'Parliaments' in plural when I talk about the gatherings as a series of events.

held in Cape Town, and the one in 2004 in Barcelona. The gatherings have drawn many thousands of people from around the world. The Parliament is an interesting phenomenon to study because it reflects a broad range of religious voices and communities. By analysing the structure and the organisation of the events one is able to observe a number of patterns emerging from the topics and themes in the program presented. Through the presentation of the Parliament, I will show how the anti-secular agenda within the interreligious movement takes shape in a discourse of religious essentialism, and how this may be connected to the absence of an intrareligious focus. Hence the title of my thesis. One of the parables advocated by Hans Küng, who played an important role at the Parliament in 1993, was ‘No world peace without dialogue between the religions’. My point is that it is just as important to stress the ‘dialogue *within* the religions’.

In addition to the Parliament itself, I will show how the organisationing of the events has become closely connected to certain anti-secular agencies which work towards an increased religious influence on the UN system. By treating the events chronologically, I will also show how changes in programs and focus may relate to historical occurrences and trends.

One of my main concerns is to show that the universalistic attitude promoted by the interreligious movement and the Parliament may be seen as expressions of Western ideas, as the activities are mainly initiated and participated in by Western agencies. However, my argument is that the intrareligious differences not are the result of cultural differences, and that initiating intrareligious dialogues between the ‘liberals’ and the ‘conservatives’ require a change from the essentialistic discourse to the processual.

Literature and sources

I have used both primary and secondary sources in my work. The theories are mainly derived from secondary sources in the forms of books, articles, web-pages and papers.

On the methodology, there does not seem to be a large field of work done on the subject of interreligious dialogues from a sociological approach. Some literature exists within the Christian theology, but as I examine the topic from a cross-religious perspective, I have not used much of this. The only exception is Paul Knitter, whose methodological concepts are central in the strategy I present. Rather, I have used sociological models to base my thesis on, especially those presented by Peter Beyer, but also general literature on the broad field of secularisation. In addition, as the thesis treats the themes of religious violence and religious

peace-making, I have also based my thesis on scholars such as Scott Appleby and Mark Juergensmeyer.

On the history of interreligious dialogues, most of the existing material seems to focus mainly on dialogues initiated by Christians, or the dialogues between two specific religions. As this has not fitted my theme of interreligious dialogues in general, I have mainly used the secondary literature by Marcus Braybrooke on the organisations existing before 1993, and what has been written about the Parliament in 1893. On the 1993 Parliament, I have almost exclusively used primary sources published by the CPWR and participants of the event, as the secondary literature on the 1993 Parliament mainly consists of philosophical or theological points of view which have not fitted my sociological approach. There is also a tendency to solely treat the declaration it resulted in and ignore the event itself, with its thousands of participants and extensive program. On the 1999 and 2004 Parliament, there does not seem to exist any secondary material at all, as they are so recent. The CPWR staff in Chicago have sent me the Program books from the Parliaments, which have been of invaluable help. In 2004 I participated at the Parliament in Barcelona myself, taking part at the sessions and conducting interviews with certain people connected to the CPWR. The material I was thereby able to record, transcribe and use in this thesis is the following:

1. A session with Dirk Ficca, the executive director of the CPWR staff.

He gave me the opportunity to contact the following persons who I interviewed:

2. Helen Spector, vice chair of the CPWR's Executive Committee.
3. Donald Benson, project manager and volunteer at the CPWR.
4. Angela Buchanan, member of the CPWR's Board of Trustees.

I also participated at the symposium *On Religions and International Institutions*, where I recorded the presentations of the following presenters (Program book 2004:72):

5. Patrice Brodeur, dean of Religious and Spiritual Life and assistant professor of religious studies at Connecticut College.
6. Azza Karam, former president of the Committee of Religious NGOs at the UN, working for the WCRP as director for the Women's Program and special advisor to the secretary general on Arab and Islamic Affairs.
7. Felix Marti, president of the Institute Lingua Pax and former director of the Centre UNESCO de Catalunya.
8. Joan Kirby, representative of the ToU and former member of the Committee of Religious NGOs at the UN.

At the same symposium I also had the opportunity to obtain the written papers and presentations of the following presenters:

9. Marcus Braybrooke, Anglican vicar near Oxford and president of the WCF.
10. Gerardo Gonzales, project director of the SFUN.

For the parts of the thesis presenting the religious actions and events fronting the headlines in the media, I have used a variety of both primary and secondary sources, while I have mainly used primary sources on the internet in presenting the history of the interreligious organisations after 1993.

I have not used sources or material from any one specific main field of academical work, as I have chosen literature and information independent of the academic tradition it has been written in, according to how they could suit my structure and arguments.

Structure of the paper

I will start the thesis with a part explaining and presenting the concepts and models I use as tools in my analysis of the interreligious movement and the Parliament. Chapter 1 serves to lay down certain points of anchorage, and to clarify the theories and academical fields upon which the thesis is built.

The main part, part II, starts with chapter 2 presenting the first Parliament in 1893 and how one even in the material at this point could detect an anti-secular agenda, although the discourse was mainly Christian and Western. It also describes briefly how society changed in a religious pluralistic way during the hundred years leading up to the second Parliament in 1993, as a result of immigrations and globalisation. This section thereby sets the historical background for the main subject; the last three Parliaments and the interreligious movement.

Chapter 3 presents and analyses the 1993 Parliament, and how one can observe the start of the interreligious anti-secular agenda there, which was a continuation from 1893, but changed by the religious pluralism which had since taken place. However, it was still dominated by participants connected to the West. I will present both the Parliament event as a whole and the document it resulted in, and show what kind of discourse was used. In addition, I will comment the absence of intrareligious focus in the program.

In chapter 4 I will take a glance at the events taking place outside of the Parliament frames between 1993 and 1999 in order to show how they demonstrated intrareligious differences and affected how religion as a whole was conceived in the Western society through the media.

This chapter also presents what happened anti-secularly in various interreligious agencies, and how it is possible to distinguish two levels within the interreligious movement: the general and the anti-secular.

The focus in chapter 5 returns to the Parliament, this time the one in 1999. Again I will, through a presentation of both the event and a document, show how the interreligious anti-secular line and discourse was continued, but how intrareligious differences still were largely overlooked.

Chapter 6 describes how certain interreligious organisations in the years between 1999 and 2004 became more closely connected in a network, and how they presented both a wide interreligious movement and the anti-secular line. During the same period of time, the intrareligious differences became very clear to the international society. I will also discuss religious terrorism.

Chapter 7 presents the Parliament in 2004 and shows how intrareligious dialogues were introduced to the program, but how there seems to be a discursive challenge in this change of perspective which should be discussed in order to establish a wide intrareligious forum. Although some structural changes in the program downscaled the anti-secular agenda, I will show how the interreligious social movement advocating that line presented itself and the projects at the event.

The final chapter, chapter 8, will discuss the intrareligious discursive challenges and make some suggestions regarding how they can be handled in the future.

Finally, in 'Final conclusions', I will summarise the main points examined and presented in the thesis.

PART I: THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

CHAPTER 1: CONCEPTS AND MODELS

”[W]e make dichotomies in our arguments and writings to suit our strategies of policy, research, and thinking, generally. But, there are also arguments that dichotomies basically belong to our apparatus of concepts, that concepts provide meanings only in oppositions. Thus the challenge of a meaningful scientific set of concepts should be to define them as in tension with oppositions and not to dismiss them. [...]What is of paramount importance, though, is to differentiate between the dichotomies in the material studied itself, and the dichotomies created in the name of science (Braarvig 1999:27).

Introduction

To understand the thesis and the approach in it, it is useful to present the theoretical framework the research has been conducted within. This part presents definitions and clarifications of concepts and terms used throughout the thesis in order to avoid misunderstandings about their meanings. It also explains the models later applied in the analysis and presentation of the Parliament.

1.1 The concept of 'religion'

It is important to lay down certain clarifications when it comes to the concept of 'religion'. First of all, the concept is a relatively recent Western invention, reflected by an ethnocentric way of looking at the world (Saler 1993:7 ff.). The notion of religion came forth in Europe when religion became marginalised in state affairs, and when people from the West came in contact with other cultures. The category was also used by Western Christians when they came in contact with other faiths which were labeled as 'pagan'. This categorisation of one part of life as opposed to the rest is unknown among many cultures, and by employing this definition one risks projecting meaning upon others which is unknown to themselves. Nonetheless, the category is widely used today by most people worldwide, at least among scholars of religions.

Second, there are a number of definitions and understandings of what the word means and signifies. I will here use a sociological, substantial definition (Beyer 1994:6):

[...] religion is a type of communication based on the immanent/transcendent polarity, which functions to lend meaning to the root indeterminability of all meaningful human communication, and which offers ways of overcoming or at least managing this indeterminability and its consequences.

Third, there is a distinction between 'religion' in singular and 'religions' in plural. I will use this difference actively in the thesis, and operate with the term 'religion' as implying the one global subsystem² which deals with the transcendent, while 'religions' implies the plurality of types and expressions within the subsystem (Beyer 1998:88): Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism etc., with all the differences existing historically and geographically.

Fourth, one can, according to Gerd Baumann, talk about two 'discourses'³ of religion': The essentialistic and the processual. Each serves different goals in different contexts (Baumann 1999:91 ff.). To take the first discourse, the understanding of religions as separate and distinguishable unities lies in an essentialistic perception of religions. Although the concept 'essentialism' has been used in various ways in the science of comparative religions⁴, it is here used in the sense that the focus on what is the 'core' of a religion consists of static dogmas and truth-claims. This understanding of religion is what Raymond Williams calls 'protestantization' (Williams 2000a:278). Following Gerd Baumann's argument that the academic field of religion has been influenced by the reigning view of 'culture' as "a system of meaning or of communication in which internal relations are logically or coherently ordered and in which external relations are discretely bounded with other cultures" (Burghart 1987:242), the same could be said of religions. Religion is often considered to equate culture, and as culture, religion has been looked at as something unchangeable, essentialised and static (Baumann 1999:83). With time, academics such as Fredrik Barth have challenged this perception of culture, and have proposed an understanding of culture as active processes leading to change (Barth 1994). The same arguments can be applied on religions, and most scholars of religion today are well aware of the changes occurring within the 'unities' of religions. Gerd Baumann is one scholar who criticises religious essentialism and claims that "[i]n this view [...] [religion] is something one has and is a member of, rather than something one makes and reshapes through constant renewing activity" (Baumann 1999:84). But instead of rejecting the essentialistic view of religion, he acknowledges the fact that this perception is

² For explanations of subsystems, see section 1.6.

³ Baumann defines the term 'discourse' in the following way: "One focuses the analysis of language and action on pragmatics, rather than semantics [...] [O]ne deals [...] with understanding what they say and do in regard to their practical intentions" (Baumann 1999:93).

⁴ For an overview of the history of essentialism in the academic field of religion, see Sørensen 1994:9-17.

widespread in society, used in the media and by politicians, religious leaders and believers. It is used as a discourse. Essentialism is for example quite useful when arguing for a common identity when it comes to demanding group claims and privileges (Baumann 1999:87), but Baumann points out that all essentialism is founded on changing processes. The act of creating a common identity on the ground of a 'core-essence' is a processual re-thinking in each new case (Baumann 1999:91). The second discourse then, is the acknowledgment of religions as processes, where they change according to the circumstances. These two discourses approach religion in very different manners and are used in different settings in order to obtain different results. It is therefore, for example, problematic to use a processual discourse in a forum where claims most successfully can be made when using an essential discourse.

Following Baumann's line, Bruce Lincoln states that "[d]iscourse becomes religious not simply by virtue of its content, but also from its claims to authority and truth. [...] Insofar as certain propositions or narratives successfully claim such status, they position themselves as truths to be interpreted, but never ignored or rejected" (Lincoln 2003:5 ff.). In other words, what this shows is a tension between religious authority based on eternal truths which are founded on the unchangeable static essentials, and the acknowledgement of processual changes in all religions.

1.2 Differences between religions

As Baumann recognises, the rejection of religions as static essences is problematic. According to Paul Knitter all religions have some so-called 'nonnegotiables' (Knitter 2003:102), which are irrevocable principles or dogmas which not can be compromised or challenged. Even though it may be hard to draw clear lines between the world religions, these principles comprise the religious borders, and the nonnegotiables most often concern the transcendent. These nonnegotiables are what can be understood as the essences of each religious unity. For Christians the nature of Jesus as the Christ is a nonnegotiable. For Muslims the holiness of the Quran and Muhammed is a nonnegotiable. For Buddhists the emptiness is a nonnegotiable. These are the principles the identities of the religions rest upon, and it is difficult to discuss the nature of truth about these matters.

Traditionally, disagreements around the nonnegotiables have been looked at as the main problem in interreligious dialogues. The idea of treating religion as one unity has often led to protests of reductionism and simplification. And the protests are well founded. For an

adherent it may seem unjust to be put in the same category as an adherent of another religion, only because they both believe in a transcendent reality, when the beliefs they hold about the transcendent are utterly different. However, as mentioned above, there are several problems connected to this understanding of religions as static unities centered around principles. Religions are dynamic, and they change with history and geography. They adapt, borrow elements from alien cultures and other religions, and there are great varieties within one and the same religion according to time and place. The concept of 'religion' is a Western invention, and in earlier studies in the academic field there was a strong tendency to study scriptures and the dogmas as ways of understanding the various beliefs. Religion was equated with doctrines and orthodoxy, while in fact there are several 'religions' (if one really can call them such) more concerned with the orthopraxical rituals and spiritual actions.

1.3 Differences within religions

Even though the concept of 'religion' and the essentialistic view of differences between 'religions' may be constructions of the West, they are today nonetheless used by the non-Western adherents themselves. Despite differing opinions and points of view, most adherents define themselves as believer of either one or the other religion. But the differences within religions are just as great as those between religions, and I will call these differences *intrareligious*. One can in fact distinguish two types of intrareligious differences. The first type is manifested in the differences between Roman Catholic Christians and Protestant Christians, between Sunni Muslims and Shia Muslims, and between Theravada Buddhists and Mahayana Buddhists, just to mention a few. These intrareligious differences may be exemplified in the differences existing between different congregations and branches of religions. But there is also another type of intrareligious difference, and it is this kind I will primarily focus on in this thesis. One may observe differences also within the congregations and branches. Two persons may go to the same holy places, participate in the same rituals, believe in the same nonnegotiables, listen to the same religious leaders, but still interpret them in very different ways. There are many who have proposed different models to describe these intrareligious differences. One of the best known models is the following⁵ (McCarthy 1998:75; Appleby 2000:13):

- 1) Exclusivists
- 2) Inclusivists

⁵ There are also others. See for example Pannikar in Marty 2005:153 ff.

3) Pluralists

In addition to these three categories, Paul Knitter also introduces a fourth (Knitter 2003:171 ff.), which he calls

4) Accepters

These categories are normally associated with Christianity, but they may usefully be applied on other religions as well (McCarthy 1998:80). The categories originally describe different ways in which Christians view other religions, depending on how they interpret the nonnegotiables, but the categories can be found in all religions and show the tension existing intrareligiously. This model describes four main attitudes on a scale where there exist differences and various strategies within each one. What I choose to focus on in the categories is how they relate to the distinction between the 'religious us' and the 'religious others', following their interpretations of the nonnegotiables. The way this distinction is made is important in today's pluralistic world where different religions exist side by side. Kliever defines pluralism as

the existence of multiple frames of reference, each with its own scheme of understanding and rationality. Pluralism is the coexistence of comparable and competing positions which are not to be reconciled. Pluralism is the recognition that different persons and different groups quite literally indwell irreducibly different worlds (Kliever in Marty 2005:60).

When religious pluralism in a society occurs religions become relative *vis-à-vis* each other, and Beyer states that the process of relativisation leads to two opposite responses from the religious adherents: They can either become 'particularistic' (or conservative), emphasising 'us' against 'others', or become 'universalistic' (or liberal), emphasising everybody as 'us' (Flink 2001:34 f.). The exclusivists, inclusivists, pluralists and accepters express different attitudes within this scale, and I will here show why one can identify exclusivist as particularistic and the other three categories as universalistic.

1.3.1 Exclusivists

The exclusivists' position holds no doubts about the absolute truth about the nonnegotiables. Adherents in this category are certain about their own religion's uniqueness as opposed to everybody else's inadequacy (McCarthy 1998:84), and make sharp distinctions between the 'religious us' and the 'religious others' (Marty in Furseth and Repstad 2003:192). They emphasise what is particular to 'us' as opposed to the 'others'. One would normally believe that this position is unlikely to be a partner in interreligious dialogues, perhaps with exception

of when proselytism is the goal, and that the party on the other side of the dialogue-table in those cases would have reason to be sceptical of the nature of the dialogue taking place. But the exclusivists have the advantage of holding absolute commitments to their belief, and can therefore appear as more credible representatives of their religions than others (McCarthy 1998:99 f.).

One result of globalisation is the meeting between different religions with different nonnegotiables. The exclusivistic response is then a natural reaction to the feeling of threat to one's own truth-claims by 'others'. Historically, religions have been connected to geographical areas, ethnic groups or nations, and in a time when the globalisation seems to erase all distinctions, it may result in an emphasis of religious socio-particularism (Beyer 1994:45 ff.).

Understandably, it is among the exclusivists one can find the 'fundamentalists'.

1.3.1.1 Fundamentalists

The expression in itself has Christian roots, and originally describes those who firmly root their belief in the Bible. Today, the term is often used to describe people who use their religions as a justification for violence. In this thesis I will base my use of the concept on two definitions. First, the *American Academy of Arts and Sciences* defines 'fundamentalism' as

neither [...] a "new religious movement" ... nor as simply "traditional," "conservative" or "orthodox" expression of ancient and premodern religious faith and practice. Rather, fundamentalism is a hybrid of both kinds of religious modes. While fundamentalists claim to be upholding orthodoxy (right belief) or orthopraxis (right behavior), and to be defending and conserving religious traditions and traditional ways of life from erosion, they do so by crafting new methods, formulating new ideologies, and adopting the latest processes and organizational structures (Lausten and Wæver 2003:161).

Another definition is R. Scott Appleby's, who claims that 'fundamentalism'

refers to a specifiable pattern of religious militance by which self-styled true believers attempt to arrest the erosion of religious identity, fortify the borders of the religious community, and create viable alternatives to secular structures and processes (Appleby 2000:86).

In other words, fundamentalism is rooted in the view of religion being something essentialistic, static and eternal, even though the way the nonnegotiables are used in themselves result from historical contexts. It is important to underline that exclusivism does not automatically lead to fundamentalism, and most exclusivists do not take to violence, but

those who are fundamentalists in the way described here tend to be exclusivists.

Fundamentalists, then, share the same sharp distinction between 'us' and 'them', but may turn to drastical means in order to defend what they define as their identities.

1.3.2 Inclusivists

Inclusivists hold the nonnegotiables to be truths in the same way as the exclusivists, but are more open to the possibilities that there are elements of truth also in other religions. A widespread attitude is to look at the range of religions in an evolutionistic framework with their own religion at the top of the hierarchial chain. The sacred is present in all religions, but is wholly fulfilled only in one's own.

Inclusivists are generally more open to interreligious dialogues than the exclusivists. Inclusivists are willing to listen to what other religions have to teach them, and change as a result of the interaction (Knitter 2003:63 ff., McCarthy 1998:87 ff). They put more emphasis on interpretations leading to the universal approach. There is not so much a 'us' against 'them' attitude as a view that all of humankind can be defined as 'us'. Still, there are many who feel there is a distinction between themselves, who have found 'enlightenment', and those whose nonnegotiables are viewed as obstacles, so one can perhaps interpret it in such a way that there are various shades with 'more or less us'. Even though the inclusivists are more open to mutual exchanges across the religious borders, it is still difficult to shake off the impression that there may be some hidden proselytising bias underlying the dialogues.

1.3.3 Pluralists

Pluralists tend to value the interpretations of the transcendent's validity to all religions and all humans more highly than the religious nonnegotiables. They are of the idea that all religions share something in common, and that all religions ultimately are different representations of the same truth (Knitter 2003:109 ff.). They are also often the most eager to enter into dialogue with other religions, and instead of separating 'us' and 'them', there is only one big category of 'us'. For pluralists, the interreligious dialogue is of utmost importance, and is necessary for religious adherents to find out what they have in common. The ethical issues and practical concerns are particularly important for pluralists (McCarthy 1998:95), and the gap between different religions may be crossed on the 'ethical-practical bridge' (Knitter 2003:134). As opposed to exclusivists, pluralists use their religious identities as the ground on which to meet others in order to find mutual interests, rather than using their religious identity as a shield or barrier in order to avoid meetings with others.

The drawback with pluralist representatives at the dialogue table is that they often have been at the margins of the religious masses. They have often been among the postmodern, intellectual elites within the traditions (McCarthy 1998:98). This may be changing (Knitter 2003:112), but the problem is still that pluralists put so little emphasis on the nonnegotiables that others will question the authenticity of their religiousness (McCarthy 1998:103 f.). The pluralists are the most universal. There are no longer any 'others', because there are no religions that can be defined as opposing one's own (Beyer 1994:86, 72).

1.3.4 Accepters

In comparison to pluralists, accepters are more committed to their nonnegotiables, but in contrast to inclusivists, they do not place their own religion above others. Or rather, they accept the fact that everybody considers their own religion to be superior to others. Accepters not only admit that the various religions have different expressions, but also different understandings of the transcendentals. Despite the differences, mutual acceptance is necessary. Accepters are not so concerned with trying to find the common ground in all religions, but rather accept that radical differences exist, and learn to live with it. They may even cherish it and find the varieties more valuable than unity. Dialogues with a 'radical other' are seen as educational, and disagreements may be useful for encouraging new perspectives. In this sense, the acceptance model may be seen as relativistic and post-modern in the sense that diversity is celebrated. But is there absolutely nothing people of different religions have in common, then? When Knitter discusses the category of pluralists, he points to the fact that all humans live in the same world, and that common practical concerns may be what is universal for everybody, no matter what nonnegotiables one believes in. The 'ethical-practical bridge' may also be what ties religions together for accepters (Knitter 2003:171 ff.). In other words, for accepters, there are a lot of 'others' in a religious sense, but as there are so many 'others', there is rather a big 'us' with diversity within unity.

It is difficult to draw clear lines between these four categories, but looking at how they approach the distinction between 'us' and 'others', the inclusivists, pluralists and accepters are open to embracing the 'religious others' as 'us'. For exclusivists the nonnegotiables are borders which can not be crossed. If the others share their beliefs, they are 'us'. If they do not, they are 'others'. For this reason I will draw the main distinction between the exclusivists and the inclusivists/inclusivists/accepters, who I call 'universalists'.

One can say that the essentialistic view of religions sustains the understanding of religions as separate unities with distinct nonnegotiables. However, by recognising the intrareligious differences existing within these unities one is forced to acknowledge how these differences came to be through contextual processes. What is problematic in acknowledging the processual changes in religions, especially for religious leaders, is the religious authority which is closely connected to the authenticity and absoluteness in the transcendent. Norms and tenets in religions are often regarded as the only stable things which provide security in a confusing and changing world, and if these anchor-points too are changing, the sense of loss for religious adherents may be tremendous.

1.4 Inter- and intrareligious activities

When talking about the concept of 'religion', it is important to notice that *religions* can not cooperate or act in any way. One can not say that "Religions should cooperate", meaning the bodiless worldviews and faiths as actors (Brodeur, Barcelona 2004). It is the religious *people* who can act. This point leads to the definitions of who the participants of inter- and intrareligious activities are. It has been difficult for me to find definitions of the words 'interreligious' and 'intrareligious' in ways which highlight the difference between them. The way they have been used in the Parliament program and by William Leshner⁶ (Leshner 2003:85) has not been satisfying according to what I want to convey. I have therefore created my own definitions of the words, which have served me well during the work of the thesis. The words 'interreligious' and 'intrareligious' are adjectives which describe the relationship between the participants who engage in different activities. So when one talks about 'interreligious dialogues' or 'interreligious cooperation', it is the relationship between the parties who engage in the dialogue or cooperation which is interreligious. As the words are adjectives I will here use the auxiliary 'activity' to describe the relationship itself:

Interreligious activities are participated in by two (or more) parties who identify themselves with different religious/spiritual communities/traditions, and/or hold different religious/spiritual dogmas to be true. These may nonetheless to some degree converge/overlap.

Intrareligious activities are participated in by two (or more) parties who hold the same religious/spiritual dogmas to be true, and/or identify themselves with the same religious/spiritual community/tradition. Nonetheless, they disagree regarding what

⁶ See paragraph 7.1.1.

ways the dogmas should be interpreted, and/or how the community/tradition should be defined.

The goal for the activities is to reach common goals and/or mutual understandings in peaceful ways and by peaceful means.

In summary; interreligious activities are those participated in by parties from different religions, and intrareligious activities are those participated in by parties from the same religion. Despite the differences existing interreligiously and intrareligiously, there is a considerable chance that people from different religions, especially universalists, can agree on practical topics even more easily than an exclusivist and a pluralist from the same religion can.

1.5 Globalisation and functional subsystems

Globalisation is an enormously complex phenomena which can be explained in many ways depending on which approach and angle one starts with. The concept of 'globalisation' is often described as the world-wide interconnectedness economically and culturally. It is also linked to the history of Western colonisation and Western influence on non-Western societies (Kurtz 1995:4 f.). I will here use Peter Beyer's understanding of Luhmann's 'communication' and 'subsystems' as a starting point for analysing religion's situation in the global world. Beyer traces the start of globalisation back to the historical shift from the Western pre-modern stratified differentiation to the post-modern functional differentiation. In pre-modern times societies were limited by small groups of elite (the upper strata) who constricted communication by controlling politics, economics and other social functions. Beyer identifies this elite to be the Christian church, which was an overarching institution regulating all practical functions. As religion's dominating role diminished and industry and technology advanced, communication started to flow more freely across societies and nation-state boundaries. A society is an entity which consists of communication, and in order to talk about distinct societies, there has to be rare and limited communication between the separate entities. As such, it is today not possible to talk about *societies* since communication between virtually any two places on the earth is possible, and takes place all the time (Beyer 1994:33 ff.)

Today there is no longer one overarching strata and system, but several subsystems. The subsystems are global, and they have to serve practical indispensable functions in society for their existences to be legitimate. Luhmann characterises the relationship between a subsystem

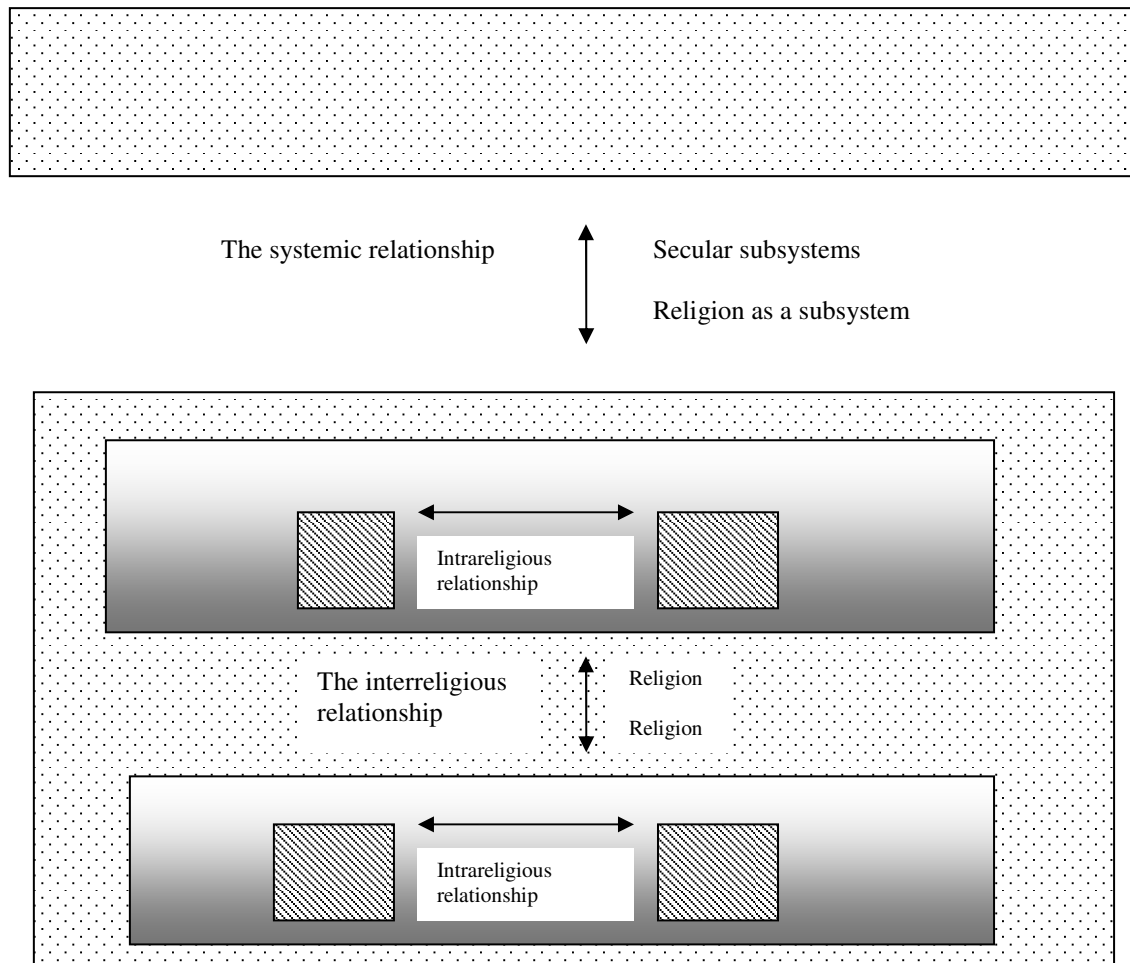
and the whole society as ‘functional’ (Beyer 1994:80). But it is important not to look at the subsystems as pieces of a pie, where the sum makes up the total society. They are rather perspectives or instrumental systems. The subsystems are characterised by the fact that they typically have professionals or leaders as representatives and holders of internal power. They also define themselves in terms of communication centred around an idea which normally consists of a binary code, such as economic communication regarding money, centred around the code of owning/not owning or purchase/sale (Beyer 1998:88 f.). Other subsystems are politics, health, education, science and law. The different functional subsystems and institutions became able to specialise across the earlier geographic boundaries with their own rationalities, norms, and goals of efficiency and profit (Beyer 1994:55), and religion is today only one differentiated functional subsystem alongside other subsystems. In other words, the structure of globalisation is based on the Western conception of religion as something set apart from the rest of society. In this regard, religion’s specific function is to connect humans to the transcendent/other-worldly. No other subsystem has the competence to do so. By becoming marginalised by secularity, religion has no longer the same authority over worldly matters as before. But Beyer argues that religions also can work in a ‘performative’ way: “Religious performance [...] occurs when religion is ‘applied’ to problems generated in other subsystems but not solved there, or simply not addressed elsewhere”. These problems he refers to as ‘residual’ matters (Beyer 1994:97, 1997:4). This does not mean that religion becomes so preoccupied in world problems that the spiritual aspect is pushed aside. It is rather that concerns over worldly matters are *added* to the transcendent function, and the spiritual is often viewed as a source of inspiration that can be used in the struggle to change the current situation. In this regard one can put it in this way:

Religious function + Immanent concerns = Religious performance

1.6 A model of the three levels

On the background of the theoretical framework it is possible to distinguish three sets of relationships:

Table 1: Religious relationships on three levels



On the first macro-level one has the systemic level where the subsystems relate to each other. On the second middle-level one has the interreligious level where the religions relate to each other.

On the third micro-level one has the intrareligious level where exclusivists, inclusivists, pluralists and accepters within the same religion relate to each other.

1.7 Secularisation

In sociology, theories have traditionally been based on the conditions existing in the West⁷, and sociologists believed that the models they made would eventually come to fit the rest of the world as well (Furseth and Repstad 2003:92). In the West, the concept of 'religion' as something set apart from the rest of society has been closely connected to the concept of 'secularisation'⁸. The origins behind this separation can be explained by processes such as the differentiation, in separate subsystems, as I presented in 1.5, and by historical events such as the Wars of Religion (1550-1650), the Westphalian decision to separate religion and politics, and the Enlightenment's belief in the rational human being (Thomas 2003:24). As a result, within the field of sociology of religion, theories of secularisation have had an important place.

The term 'secularisation' has been used inconsistently as a result of a shift in the way different scholars have hypothesised about religion. One can roughly categorise their standpoints into three types: those who endorse 'strong secularisation', or the inevitable decline of the existence of all religion in general; those who instead endorse a moderate 'semi-weak secularisation', or the *privatisation* of religion; and in the last category, those who endorse a 'weak secularisation', where questions are raised about the validity of the whole secular divide. The last category defines religion perhaps in a more functional way than the first two.

The first category is more *antireligious*, and is associated with names such as Auguste Comte and Karl Marx. Emile Durkheim and Max Weber can also be put in this category, even though they were more sceptical as to whether the development actually was positive or not. These people both reflected and influenced their contemporary society; the 18-1900s were characterised by a strong belief in rationality and modernity (Jørgensen 2003:12 ff.). However, there are still those who advocate this development today. An example is Steve Bruce with his book *God is dead* (Bruce 2002). However, during the last 50 years this idea of secularisation as a desirable or inevitable development has been generally criticised, and a more moderate position has emerged. Scholars such as David Martin have accused the 'strong secularists' for personally endorsing atheism, while others, such as Bryan Wilson and Karel Dobbelaere, have taken a more nuanced approach to the term. Dobbelaere thought that religion's influence could decline on three different levels: in societies' state policy, in organisations, and in individuals (Furseth and Repstad 2003:102). By making the picture

⁷ I will in this thesis identify 'West' mainly as Northern America, Western Europe and Australia.

⁸ For a more detailed presentation of the history of the concept etc., see Casanova 1994:11 ff.

more nuanced, this paves the way for the theories of 'semi-weak secularisation', which most sociologists have accepted today. It simply means that religion has been confined to the private sphere, and that there is freedom of religion outside the official arena (Jørgensen 2003:12 ff.)⁹. Among those who endorse the theories of 'weaker secularisation' are for example Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann (Furseth and Repstad 2003:74 ff.).

However, it is too simplistic to merely draw a distinction between religious influence on state policies and the public on one side, and the private sphere on the other. The privatisation of religion has not followed throughout the world as a result of Western influence on other cultures. Several examples, perhaps first and foremost the Iranian Revolution in 1979, have showed that religion can not so easily be separated from the rest of society as Western academics have believed. And even within the 'West', there are big differences in how privatised religion actually is. The West has long been regarded as secular in the sense that religion has become privatised, separated from the state and government decisions, in countries with specifically non-religious constitutions. In other words, religion has lost its influence on politics and other important sectors in society (Haynes 1998:63 f.). But in Norway, for example, there is still an official Protestant state church protected by the constitution, and Grace Davie argues that religious institutions still play important roles in several European countries (Davie in Furseth and Repstad 2003:77). In addition, scholars like Robert Bellah and José Casanova claim that religion is still part of official state policies through 'civil religion' and the way public religion at the civil society level influences state decisions (Furseth and Repstad 2003:126 ff.). According to Danièle Hervieu-Leger even the strictly secular France is strongly influenced by Catholicism (Hervieu-Leger in Furseth and Repstad 2003:77). In these theories of 'weak secularisation', religion is defined more functionally than substantially. The theories regarding religion are no longer concerned only with official religious institutions, but also take account of unregistered individual beliefs, religious language and religious characteristics in non-religious sectors.

Looking at how religion influences all parts of society in all parts of the world, it is fitting to question the validity of the idea of secularisation in the way it compartmentalises society, both internationally and in the West, and its implementation. There are several indications that the strict privatisation of religion is not as clear cut as previous theories have suggested, and that religious groups are trying to regain their earlier influence on all levels of society. It is in

⁹ This is called 'privatisation'.

light of these tendencies that I want to suggest that the interreligious movement, manifested at the Parliament, contains clear anti-secular¹⁰ elements.

As I choose to focus on religion(s) as system(s), I will focus mainly on secularisation in institutions and agencies at the national or international scale. Therefore, I will not focus on the 'weak secularisation' concept where religion is considered functionally. However, one also has to remember that religion and secularisation do have impacts on individuals and their private lives: there are a number of elements that show that people's religiousness does not disappear in spite of the weak position religious institutions hold in society. I will therefore present how religion has become individualised, as exemplified in the New Age movement.

1.7.1 Individualisation and New Age

As a result of the religious pluralism in Western societies today, combined with a religious privatisation which allows a freedom of religion where no religion officially is regarded as superior to others, individuals are faced with a 'religious supermarket'¹¹. According to Berger, Bellah and Robert Wuthnow, there has been a change in how people relate to religion, towards what can be called 'individualisation'. Instead of being born into a religious community which automatically becomes part of one's identity, people are now able to choose between a variety of religious and spiritual traditions. Nonnegotiables can be mixed and matched as one pleases. Some sociologists also claim that whereas the most important feature in religions earlier was authority, it is now *authenticity* (Furseth and Repstad 2003:150 ff.). What gives religion its authority is the degree to which it is perceived to be authentic. Perhaps as a result of these combined elements, there is today a new awareness of the religious movement called 'New Age'.

The term 'New Age' is a vague label attached to a variety of religious expressions with certain similar characteristics. It is not so much a religion in the traditional, institutionalised sense, as it is a milieu that has become aware of itself as a *movement*. There are no leaders or organisations, normative doctrines or rituals which serve as demarcations for New Age. It is rather a number of unorganised independent individuals who have found their own religious expressions, and may, or may not, occasionally meet. The movement is heavily inspired and based on Western esoterical traditions¹², but it became noticeable to the wider public first and foremost by the way it was presented by the hippies during the 1960s. Despite the changes

¹⁰ 'Anti-secular' in the sense of 'anti-privatisation'. The 'anti-secular' here concerns that which tries to make religion more influential in the secular areas of life.

¹¹ "Religious marketplace = metaphor referring to a multicultural context in which religious institutions and traditions compete for adherents and worshippers "shop" for faith that satisfies them" (Kurtz 1995:275).

¹² For an elaborate presentation on the subject, see Hanegraaff 1996:365 ff.

that have occurred within the New Age movement during the last decades, it can still be understood as a counter-cultural expression (Hanegraaff 1996:1, 10, 14, 17). I will here focus on two characteristics of New Age that are relevant to the analysis of the interreligious movement: the way it relates to religious pluralism, and the way it represents an idea of a world transformation¹³.

At first sight, New Age may appear as anything but Western. When going through New Age bookshops, meetings, magazines etc., one finds a range of non-Western religious traditions such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Celtic religion, Shamanism, Native American religion etc. The religious diversity in the world becomes a spiritual supermarket where each individual can choose whatever suits their taste, as presented in the 'rational choice' theory by Stark and Bainbridge (Furseth and Repstad 2003:145 ff.). New Age has a syncretistic character where all nonnegotiables are considered to be equally good (Hunt 2002:156). However, behind this seemingly relativistic attitude, there is a strong idea that everything is an expression of an 'Ultimate Source'. New Age is universal and pluralistic to the degree that only exclusivists are excluded. As long as the principles of holism and universalism are endorsed, one is entitled to believe in anything (Hanegraaff 1996:120, 327 ff, 2001:19). This is, then, an expression of a universal essentialism. The language used to describe the transcendent is often vague and not attached to any specific religion, and words often used are for example 'spirituality', 'universal energy', 'Ultimate Reality' and 'God' (in a pantheistic, abstract sense).

New Age is also marked by the vision of a need to transform the world (thus also the term 'New Age'). Rooted in the Western society-critical hippie movement, concepts like 'the Age of Aquarius', 'New Paradigm' and 'Critical Mass' reflect that New Age forms a criticism of the way the world is run today (Hanegraaff 1996:117 ff., 331ff., 515 ff.), and it is also linked to issues such as environmentalism, peace, human rights and gender equality (Hunt 2002:157, 160).

New Age represents both a strong functional universal relativism and an absolutist performance at the same time. But as a religion in itself New Age does not have a high status, as it is considered to be a fashionable 'quasi-religion'. This is shown, and may partly be explained, by the way it has been portrayed by the media, by exclusivistic Christians and by those who want to make fun of it (Hanegraaff 1996:2). Another reason may be the fact that New Age is considered to be too individually constructed and non-authentic. By not being a

¹³ For a more thorough introduction to New Age, see Hanegraaff 1996.

traditional world religion with a firm structure and essential nonnegotiables, it is not recognised as a religious authority in the eyes of other religions and the secular subsystems.

Summary

In this section I have given an overview of the theoretical framework I will use in the thesis. I have presented how I will use the concept 'religion', and how differences between and within religions lead to inter- and intrareligious activities. I have also presented how religion as one subsystem relates to other subsystems on the systemic level, and how I therefore will operate with relationships on three levels. In addition, I have shown how secularisation is based on a Western way of thinking historically linked to modernity. In the main part I will actively use this theoretical base in my analysis and presentation of how religious performance is expressed in an anti-secular way at the Parliament.

PART II: THE PARLIAMENT OF THE WORLD'S RELIGIONS

CHAPTER 2: BETWEEN 1893 AND 1993

Time is a sort of river of passing events, and strong as its current; no sooner is a thing brought to sight than it is swept by and another takes its place, and this too will be swept away (Marcus Aurelius, internet1).

Introduction

In this part I will show how the two uses of religious performance, the anti-secular and the pluralistic¹⁴, are founded on historical processes. The Parliament in 1893 was marked by a clear discourse of Christian essentialism, despite the attention the Asian non-Christian representatives attracted, and the anti-secular religious performance was distinguishable already at this point. The pluralistic religious performance started to emerge as the West became increasingly religiously pluralistic after the Second World War. The historical overview presented in this chapter serves as a necessary background in order to understand the following analysis of the later Parliament events.

2.1 The World's Parliament of Religions in 1893

The *World's Parliament¹⁵ of Religions* in 1893 took place as part of the *World Columbian Exposition* in Chicago, and has later been regarded as a benchmark in the history of interreligious dialogues. During the days 11 – 27 September, the Parliament drew 150 000 spectators, and almost two hundred speakers from various world religions presented their papers (Ziolkowski 1993:8). The Exposition was a marking of the four hundredth anniversary of Christopher Columbus' discovery of America. It was a celebration of modernity, with its belief in technology, science, industry and democracy. During the Columbian Exposition, 200 different congresses drew 700 000 people, and the Parliament was but one of them. It was nonetheless the single event that drew the most attention (Seager 1993:4). A few interreligious dialogues had taken place before, but they had been separate and unsystematic.

¹⁴ Here I mean 'pluralism' in the sense that the focus is on obtaining peaceful co-existence in a religiously pluralistic society. I do not mean 'pluralism' as opposed to 'exclusivism' and 'inclusivism' in the model under paragraph 1.3.

¹⁵ The word 'parliament' was meant to express two things: That representatives of the religions came together as equals to communicate, and that the representatives should come from the grass roots. They were not to be official delegations, but representatives on an individual, personal basis.

In other words, there had not been any history of interreligious encounters where the goal had been to learn about and find resemblances in the religious 'other', because what often has marked, and still marks, interreligious encounters is the sharp distinction drawn between 'us' and 'the others'. The World's Parliament of Religions stands for many as the turning point of this trend. The event is often referred to as the event when the true interreligious dialogue really began (Martin 2001:7).

Besides the significance the event has been said to have for the history of interreligious dialogues, it also had a significance for the academic study of religion. It was during this period that the study of religion as an independent scholarly field was shaped, and Ziolkowski draws the conclusion that one of the 'legacies' left after the 1893 Parliament was exactly the tradition of the 'Science of Religions' (Ziolkowski 1993:23)¹⁶. Several 'scientific' or academic papers were presented during the event, including one by Friederich Max Müller¹⁷, and the Parliament spurred an interest in the religious field in scholarly circles at American universities (Ziolkowski 1993:30). In retrospect it is easy to label several of these papers essentialistic and phenomenistic (i.e. believing that all religions are founded on a connection to something transcendent or humans' religious nature) (Ziolkowski 1993:69,85,87,101), but the Western understanding of 'religion' as one separate object as opposed to the non-religious, and that all religions in essence came out from the same source, was one of the traits of the Parliament. This is exactly the reason why there are two distinct features in the Parliament worth noticing: The first is the anti-secular attitude that was visible throughout the Parliament, based on the understanding of religion as something separate and marginalised in society. The second feature was the clear unifying idea of all religions coming into one. But this understanding of religious unification, which is an example of how essentialism was used here, was strongly marked by a Christian triumphalism. I will here give the background for these two characterisations.

2.1.1 Socially concerned anti-secularity

The reigning world-view during the latter half of the nineteenth century in the West was dominated by a positivistic, progressive idea of the 'White Man's' supremacy. The West was a worldwide colonial power and expansion was understood to be the future (Kitagawa 1993:172). The paradigm of secularity, that religion eventually would totally disappear from

¹⁶ The second is the tradition concerning interreligious dialogue, and the third is the international Christian ecumenical assemblies (Ziolkowski 1993:25 ff.) This view is also shared by Diana Eck (Eck in Seager 1993:xiv ff.)

¹⁷ Even though he was not personally present.

not only civil society but from society in general, was the shared belief advocated by influential thinkers such as Freud, Marx, Nietzsche and Darwin (Marty 1986(a):90). It was a highly secular time, so one can ask the question how it was possible to organise such a religious event which attracted so much attention. Despite the secularity of the Western society, Christian missionaries had been important parties in the agenda of spreading the Western civilisation to the ‘non-civilised’ (non-Western) world, and an anti-secular spirit was still kept alive in the circles of Pietists and English Evangelicals (Kitagawa 1993:172). In addition, the first signs of a socially concerned Protestantism could be detected in the secular USA. As the *American Constitution* was founded on the split between the State and the Church, the Protestant churches, who were the country’s dominant religious institutions, had accepted this distinction. People perceived the USA to be the Protestants’ chosen land in which the leadership would be guided by God’s providence (Marty 1986(b):40, 86). This resulted in religious activity being confined to the private and individual sphere, where the main religious fight against social problems were directed towards individual vices such as gambling, duelling, drinking and prostitution (Marty 1986(b):92). As the cities grew dramatically in size¹⁸ and industrialisation increased¹⁹, new problems arose, such as alienation and unemployment (Marty 1986(b):159). Perhaps inspired by religious activities such as the *Salvation Army*, which were directed towards social problems, the *Social Gospel* movement was formed during the last decades of the 1800s. What distinguished this Protestantism from the more common variety, was the focus placed on wide public concerns. The socially concerned Protestants, most notably Walter Rauschenbusch, were not content with religion’s limited influence in society, and aimed towards the active transformation of the world by ‘meddling with politics’ (Marty 1986(b):177 ff., 201 f.). This attitude had previously been seen as a rebellion against the natural law of God (Marty 1986(b):93), but the Social Gospel can be considered to be the beginning of the socially concerned anti-secular religious activity in the USA. This same socially concerned, anti-secular religiousness is visible in the Parliament agenda. The Parliament charter included the following:

To unite all Religion against all irreligion; to make the Golden Rule the basis of this union; to present the world [...] the substantial unity of many religions in the good deeds of the Religious life; to provide for a World’s Parliament of Religions, in which their common aims and common grounds of unity may be set forth, and the

¹⁸ “In 1776 only five colonial cities had grown to 20,000 or 30,000 in population, and at the beginning of the century only New York had reached 60,000. By 1860 New York numbered 600,000 people, and numerous other cities were thriving “ (Marty 1986(b):107).

¹⁹ “The industrial labor force increased over 125 percent between 1820 and 1840, and more and more of this force was in cities” (Marty 1986(b):109).

marvelous Religious progress of the Nineteenth century be reviewed (Kitagawa 1993:175).

The first sentence in itself is quite clear on the attitude taken towards secular society. At this point ‘secularity’ can probably be understood as ‘strong’ secularity²⁰, as the term in 1893 was atheistic and theories about secularity have since been modified. However, the anti-secular agenda is impossible to misunderstand, and the aim is to “unite all Religion”. The various religions were perceived as being too scattered and weak to fight against “irreligion”, therefore they had to unite their strengths.

Looking at the program, it is also easy to observe the anti-secular agenda. The intention was that the papers presented should follow the specific topic of the day, which all in all would give 16 topics. Of these, the following can be distinguished as related to social concerns and the anti-secular agenda: *Religion in its Relations to the Natural Sciences and to Arts and Letters*, *Religion and Social Problems*, and *Religion and Civil Society*. Here, one can see that ‘religion’ was understood as an object separate from other things, and that this object could be linked to non-religious issues. By embracing these issues religion could stretch beyond the marginalised position it had in society. The essentialised discourse used during the Parliament was in other words what Baumann calls “a useful strategy in arguing for rights and exemptions, collective demands, and even group privileges” (Baumann 1999:87).

The topics of the days also reveal the Christian nature of the Parliament. Some of them were purely Christian, such as *The Present religious condition of Christendom and Religious reunion of Christendom* (Braybrooke 1992:23). Another section of the program was named *Criticism and Discussion of Missionary Methods* (Ziolkowski 1993:135 footnote 9). The whole Parliament was marked by a strong Christian flavour.

2.1.2 Christian triumphalism

Even though the Parliament charter stated that the goal was to “unite all Religion against irreligion” on the basis of their common goals, this did not mean that all religions would stand on an equal footing in their fight against irreligion. There was no doubt that the majority of the participants were of the meaning that all religions should unite in Christianity. One can say that the Parliament reflected the new Christian approach towards other religions at that time. Through colonial and missionary history Christian encounters with different religions have been marked by the desire to baptise the ‘heathens’ to the ‘true religion’. But at the end of the 19th century a new attitude started to flourish among Christians. In Protestant

²⁰ See paragraph 1.7.

missionary circles the ideas of *Anknüpfungspunkten*²¹ and ‘fulfillment’ became more accepted (Sharpe 1984:14 f.), founded on the Darwinistic thought of the evolution from a low form of existence to a higher through time. Christianity was the top of the chain of evolution, and the other religions were on their way to transformation. They would be ‘fulfilled’ with some help and guidance, and they would all soon become Christians. This attitude was evident through the whole event. Christianity was still regarded as *the* one true religion, but changing attitudes made it possible to at least enter into dialogues with adherents of other religions, as was done at the Parliament. In other words, the Christian discourse at the Parliament was inclusivist in that the Christians did not exclude the ‘pagans’ in their view of salvation, but still ranged Christianity above other religions. As the attitude earlier had been exclusivistic, it had now started to become inclusivistic.

The Christian dominance of the event is striking if one takes a look at the numbers. The Parliament was proposed as a part of the Exposition by Charles Carroll Bonney, a lawyer and member of the *Swedenborgian Church*. He was also the creator and chairman of the *Committee on Religious Congresses*. The Committee consisted of 16 persons in addition to Bonney himself, and 14 of the participants were representatives of Protestant denominations. The two exceptions were a Jewish rabbi and a Catholic archbishop (Braybrooke 1992:11). There was also a clear majority of Christians among the presenters. The number of non-Christians or non-Western representatives was low. There were about 200 presenters in all, and most of them were English-speaking Christians. There were about 200 papers presented at the Parliament²², and 78 percent were delivered by Christians. 16 papers presented Buddhism, 13 Hinduism, and 11 Judaism. There were 152 Christians presenters, and 73 percent of them came from USA. The rest were either converts from South Asia or members of the Orthodox churches. There were 43 ‘Eastern’ presenters, coming from countries such as Armenia, Syria, Turkey, Russia, India, China and Japan (Both Christian and non-Christians). The non-Western presenters formed 22 percent of the total 200 (Seager 1995:72 f.). Looking at the numbers according to religions, 30 of the ‘Eastern’ presenters were so-called ‘heathens’, which meant that they were neither white nor Greco-Roman, neither Jews nor Christians. There were 11 participants from Judaism, 12 Buddhists, 8 Hindus, and about 10

21 The idea was that there were ‘points of contact’ or similarities between Christianity and the non-Christian faiths, which served as proof that God also could reveal His truth in other religions, but on a smaller scale. These similarities were evidence of ‘natural revelations’, and could be used in the missionary. The result of this idea was the same for fulfillment, and both concepts are inspired by evolutionism.

22 194 papers according to Braybrooke (1992:27), 216 papers according to Seager (1995:50). The reason why the numbers vary is probably due to the brevity of some of the presentations, which were more in the nature of comments than papers.

others were Asian delegations from Shintoism, Confucianism, Jainism and Zoroastrianism (Seager 1995:50, Braybrooke 1992:27-34). One representative of Islam was present, who was an American convert. The reason for this lack of Muslim representation was probably that the Sultan of Turkey strongly opposed the Parliament-event (Kitagawa 1993:176).

Besides the numbers clearly showing the Christian and Western dominance, 'triumphalism' was also noticeable through the program. The topics listed were concerned with theological problems, social challenges and religion's relationship to the secular society, but the papers were mostly concerned with the Christian approach to the subjects. As already mentioned, some of the topics were also exclusively Christian. Even some of the 'scholarly' papers were marked by a Christian evolutionism, in which all religions would go through a Darwinistic transformation towards the highest form: Christianity (Ziolkowski 1993:86,108,126). In addition, Christian psalms were sung and the participants were expected to join in *Lord's Prayer* (Braybrooke 1992:20-23). In his opening speech, Charles Carroll Bonney stated that "each system of Religion stands by itself in its own perfect integrity, uncompromised, in any degree, by its relation to any other" (Bonney in Seager 1993:21), but this was contrasted by John Henry Barrows. In his opening speech, he addressed the non-Christian participants to agree that "Christendom may proudly hold up this Congress of Faiths as a torch of truth and love which may prove the morning star of the twentieth century" (Barrows in Seager 1993:24 f.). After the Parliament, Barrows also wrote an article about the results of the Parliament, and he wrote a comment to the section in the program called *Criticism and discussion of missionary methods*. Some of the non-Christian Asian presenters had given their critical views about the Christian missionary activity, and Barrows wrote that:

No intelligent believer in Christian missions has had his faith shaken by the stories, - some of them almost fairy stories, - which two or three delegates to the parliament related. [...] No phenomenon of the century has on the whole been more remarkable than the Christian uprising in Europe and America to give the Gospel to all lands (Barrows in Ziolkowski 1993:133).

The Asian participants could not fail to notice this arrogance, but they saw the event as the beginning of the spread of Eastern thought to the West, and they brought back their own ideas of how to resist the Christian missionary activities by using the 'fulfillment' strategy in their own religions (Thelle 1993:218, Braybrooke 1992:42). One can actually trace some of today's religious pluralistic lines in the West back to some of the non-Christian presenters from 1893. This was probably not one of the effects the Christian delegates at the Parliament had anticipated or hoped for as an outcome of the event.

2.1.3 The Asian participants' impact on Western religious pluralism

Even though the number of participants from non-Christian religions was small, this was actually the first time many Western people had met representatives from other religions at all. They were looked at as 'exotic'²³, but at least they got the chance to introduce themselves. The attention they got from the spectators and the press was massive, and the Christian reactions were both enthusiastic and condemnatory (Kitagawa 1993:176). Three representatives in particular would later spur interest for these 'new' religions in the West: Swami Vivekananda, Angarika Dharmapala and Shaku Soen. They were all young men in 1893, and part of the 'modern religious reformers'. In the Asian colonised countries there were two strong opposing elites: those who advocated everything Asian and shunned all Western influence, and those who embraced all Western influence and viewed the Asian as obsolete. The 'modern religious reformers' were of the opinion that the Asian and the Western could melt together. They were influenced by Western thoughts and education, but were proud of the culture, language and religion from their native countries, and thought the Asian traditions were strong and flexible enough to adapt to the modern changes. These reformers were much criticised and ridiculed in their home countries, but all three saw the Parliament as an opportunity to reach a wider audience and spread their ideas (Kitagawa 1993:177).

Swami Vivekananda was perhaps the most popular person at the Parliament. He had studied law at the University of Calcutta and had been a disciple of the Hindu teacher Sri Ramakrishna (Kitagawa 1993:179). The media described him as eloquent in English, standing out in his yellow or red turban, and addressing the audience as one big family (Seager 1993:336 f.). He presented several papers at the Parliament and stayed in USA for many years afterwards. He travelled around giving lectures, and founded the *Vedanta Societies* in New York and San Francisco. On his return to India he founded the *Ramakrishna Mission Association* there, and returned to USA in 1899 and founded another Vedanta Society in California. Today, these centers have attracted a large number of people, and a new set of Vedanta institutions have been founded, such as the *Chinmaya Mission centers* and the *Arsha Vidya Gurukula*. One can find them in a number of Western and Indian cities (Kitagawa 1993:179, Braybrooke 1993:33, Eck 2000:227).

²³ Christianity encountered other religions during colonisation. What happened was that they projected a stereotyped image on the religious 'other' "who was alternately exotic or the embodiment of either all those things they wished they were or all the things they did not want to admit they were or potentially might be (Martin 2001:5).

Angarika Dharmapala came from Sri Lanka, and had founded the *Bodhgaya Mahabodhi Society* (also called *Maha Bodhi Society*) in Colombo, aided by Madame Blavatsky and the *Theosophical Society*. He was also a big 'hit' at the Parliament with his flowing hair and fierce speech. After the Parliament he brought the *Maha Bodhi Society* to England (Kitagawa 1993:180, Coleman 2001:58 ff.). He gained the friendship of Paul Carus, an American publisher who had taken part at the Parliament, and they both were to publish several books on Buddhism in America (Bartholomeusz 1993:242).

Shaku Soen did not attract very much attention at the Parliament since he did not speak English. He later organised the Buddhist-Christian conference *Little Parliament of Religions* of 1896 in Japan, but in the West it was rather his pupil D.T. Suzuki who was to gain most influence. He also received help from Paul Carus, and many consider Suzuki to be responsible for introducing *Zen Buddhism* to the Western people through his writings and lectures (Kitagawa 1993:181, Coleman 2001:58 ff.).

Even though the degree of Western religious pluralism that can be directly traced back to the 1893 Parliament is limited, it was a start for people in the West to learn about non-Western religions. But the actual contact with people from non-Western culture did not accelerate until after the Second World War. That was when the migration to the West increased and religious pluralism really began.

2.2 The changing international society

During the one hundred years between the first and the second Parliaments, several important changes occurred in the international society which changed the religious landscape, especially in the Western countries. I will here focus on two changes which have had consequences for the Parliament: The increased religious pluralism in the West, and the international events and signs that refuted the theories about strong secularism.

Up until the Second World War, the Western countries were more or less homogenous when it came to culture, ethnicity and religion. Western Europe was mainly Christian (either Protestant or Catholic), and the Americans consisted of European immigrants. This changed dramatically after 1945 when the post-war reconstruction of the European continent started, and as a result of shortage of labour, the countries needed labour immigrants. The immigration policies became less restrictive, and active recruitment was pursued. The immigrants were generally young men who envisioned the stay to be temporary, so attempts to integrate these groups was lacking from both the host communities' and the work

immigrants' side. Because of different policies and cases in each European country, it is impossible to generalise about the immigrants' native countries, but often, the countries sought labour in their former colonies. This led, for example, to the arrival of South Asians in Britain and North-Africans in France, while Germany made bi-lateral agreements which led to the arrival of Turks. In the various countries the dominant waves of immigrants had different origins according to the countries' policies. Strong immigration continued throughout the 1960s as the countries' economies grew, but in 1973 the oil-price increase led to an economic recession, and unemployment started to rise. The immigrants were now perceived as dangerous competitors for the few jobs remaining, and the governments enacted new laws to make the workers return to their home countries. Some of them did, but those who stayed were permitted to bring their families over. This actually resulted in an increase of the total number of foreigners, as the women and children who arrived outnumbered the men who left. Another wave of foreigners arrived in the West during the 1980s and 1990s. These people were refugees, coming for economic or political reasons. Many of them came from different countries than the work immigrants, making the European countries even more multi cultural (Vertovec and Peach 1997:13 ff., Smith 2002:3 ff., Roggero 2002:131 ff.).

Up until the 1900s the immigration to North America was almost exclusively European. This changed during the 1960s when *The Immigration and Nationality Act* opened the earlier restrictive 'national origins' quotas. The difference compared to the European immigration however, was that many of the workers going to Europe were poorly educated and without special skills. The American laws, in contrast, favoured highly educated professionals and scientists. The two continents therefore welcomed foreigners of different social levels, and Asia saw a 'brain drain' to Northern America. During the 1970s and early 1980s restrictive laws were also enacted here, but the same family-reunion system still led to a continuing rise in foreign arrivals (Williams 2000b:215).

The post-war period led to an increase in the cultural and religious plurality in the Western countries. As the male-dominated foreign workers' societies developed into family-based societies, the establishment of religious institutions also arose. The immigrants mostly moved to the big cities, and as total separation between the various religious communities was impossible, interreligious ties were established in the neighbourhoods. Even though the societies were inhabited by a Christian majority, the introduction and visibility of Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, Sikhs, Zoroastrians and Jains transformed the religious landscape radically. Many of the immigrants came from religiously-based communities, and becoming a religious minority in a secular society led to a change in the way they lived and understood

religion. This also changed the way Western people understood religion, as they now saw how others did not so easily leave their religion at home when going to work. Parallel to people maintaining their private religions and thus weakening the theories of 'strong secularisation, many scholars started criticising the 'strong' theories of secularity during the next decades, moderating them to rather talk about the 'privatisation' of religion than the full 'disappearance' of religion. One of the reasons why the secular paradigm had been weakened was the global upsurge of religious activities on the political arena. The real turning point was the *Iranian Revolution* in 1979. As Western-inspired programs failed in the former colonies, resulting in a number of social and economical problems, the national, secular governments faced strong opposition from the population. The combined effect of a number of elements was a rise of a dissatisfied population who demanded a return to the more traditional, religious ways of ruling the country (Haynes 1998:17). This 'return' to religion in non-Western countries took many Western academics by surprise (Kepel 2000:299), and was also followed by increased Christian activity in the USA, in addition to the upsurge of New Age. The strong secular paradigm was refuted and replaced by theories of anti-secularisation. During the ten to twenty years after the Iranian Revolution, religion started to emerge on the political arena all over the world, especially in conflicts. Examples of this could be seen in countries such as Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, the Middle East, India, Nigeria, the USA, and Thailand (Haynes 2002:17 f.).

2.3 The interreligious activities between 1893 and 1993

Despite several attempts at directly continuing the Parliament events after 1893, none were successful. Instead, the Parliament became an inspiration for several gatherings, and indirectly led to the founding of some interreligious organisations and initiatives. I will here mention some of the activities which took place during the hundred years up to 1993.

A number of dialogues and organisations sprang up between 1893 and 1993, but it was not until after the Second World War that the ideas behind the interreligious activities had any wider resonance. First of all, the atheistic secularism still reigned in the world-understanding of many Western academics. Second, the tolerant attitude towards other religions as shown during the Parliament did not have widespread acceptance among the adherents of the various religions (Braybrooke, Barcelona 2004).

The following list provides only a sample of the interreligious events which took place, primarily initiated in the West, including both bi-lateral activities and activities engaging more than two religions.

As Christianity is the world's most widespread religion, and Christian adherents and missionaries have encountered other religions in all parts of the world, it is not surprising that they often are the most eager participants in interreligious activities. For example with respect to the Christian-Buddhist encounters, the attitude towards Western culture was quite hostile in the Asian countries at the end of the 19th century as a result of the growing nationalism. The hostility started to change after the Parliament in 1893 and the Buddhist-Christian Conference in 1896 (Thelle 2003:235 f.). However, the Christians have always been a minority in the Asian countries, so the regional bilateral dialogues have usually been initiated by the Christians. That Christians took the initiative can also be said about other geographical regions, where missionaries gained access thanks to the colonisation. Following the Christian ecumenical tradition from the Parliament in 1893, several intrareligious organisations were also founded. In 1919 the *International Fellowship of Reconciliation* was founded, in 1925 the *Conversations de Malines*, dialogues between Catholics and Anglicans, took place in Belgium (internet2), and in 1924 the *National Conference of Christians and Jews* was established in USA, followed by the *International Council of Christian and Jews* (ICCI) in 1975 (Braybrooke 1992:178,188). In 1948 the *World Council of Churches* (WCC) was founded (internet2), and since 1961 it has brought together over three hundred Protestant, Anglican, Orthodox and Pentecostal churches. It has a *Sub-Unit for Dialogue with People of Living Faiths*, which engages in dialogues with the other religions. It has organised several meetings with Muslims from 1969 up until today (Braybrooke 1992:202,216-223), and has also organised meetings with Buddhists together with the *Christian Conference of Asia* (Mendis 2002:41 f.).

One of the principal changes in the Catholic Christian attitude towards non-Christians took place when the Second Vatican Council in 1966 presented the decrees *Nostrae Aetate* and *Lumen Gentium*. The documents led to a deeper respect concerning other religions, and one of the organisations initiated as a response to that was the *Monastic Interreligious Dialogue*. It was founded in 1977 by the *Alliance for International Monasticism* with the aim of creating an understanding between the monastic practitioners in the world's religions, especially between Catholics and Buddhists (internet3).

According to Braybrooke, there were four main international interfaith organisations existing in 1993. Their histories may differ, but they have later had much to say for the

CPWR, and therefore also the Parliaments. The *International Association for Religious Freedom* (IARF) was founded in 1900, and was originally named the *International Council of Unitarian and other Liberal Religious Thinkers and Workers*²⁴. Charles William Wendte was its founder, and even though he himself did not participate at the 1893 Parliament, several of the other key members in the founding process had taken part in and been inspired by it. The organisation was meant to unite the liberal religious adherents, but the perspective of who could join changed several times. For several decades the members constituted primarily Western Christians from Europe and the USA, but in 1984 it included fifty member groups from twenty-one countries from all over the world. It included Christians, Buddhists, Shintoists, Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims. The main goal and work of the IARF have also changed. From being a congress-based attempt to unite liberal religious, it has grown into an institutional organisation systematically working for the human right of religious freedom (Braybrooke 1992:45-62).

The *World Congress of Faiths* (WCF) was founded by Sir Francis Younghusband who initially had the idea of the uniting mystical experience behind all religions. He organised the first Congress in 1936, and got a number of respected religious members and scholars to present their papers. The day after the Congress ended it was decided to set up a committee for further Congresses. But several participants had expressed their disagreement with Younghusband's view of all religions as one, and it generally agreed that the goal was not to create one uniting religion, but to promote understanding between the adherents. For several decades the WCF has continued to work actively to achieve its goal, and has provided education and information about the various religions through giving talks, publishing papers and establishing centres (Braybrooke 1992:63-92).

The *Temple of Understanding* (ToU) was founded in 1968 by Judith Hollister. She started with the idea of creating a center in which all the religions could exist within the same building, and create a sort of 'spiritual United Nations' which also would be a place for studying the world's religions. The idea soon developed into a long series of *Spiritual Summit Conferences*, and its main activities are these meetings. Through these conferences one can notice a change from the purely spiritual and dialogical, to the practical and collaborative. ToU has also developed educational programs and publishes a newsletter (Braybrooke 1992:93-113).

²⁴ Today's name was adopted in 1969.

What is striking when looking at all of these interreligious activities during the period 1893-1993 is that most of them during the first fifty years were mostly concerned with what happened within religion's confined sphere in society. The dialogues were on theologies and the transcendent. The aim was to promote understanding between the adherents, but within the secular marginality. It was based on goals of peaceful co-existence within the increasingly pluralistic society, but non-religious issues were not dominant in this agenda. One can argue that the shift from religious to practical matters was not a new phenomenon that occurred after the Second World War. Already several of the papers during the Parliament in 1893 concerned practical matters, but then the dialogue was not really interreligious, but Christian. The shift to a focus on practical issues, such as human rights, may have been accelerated by the founding of the United Nations (UN) in 1945. In addition to the founding of the UN, the *Second Vatican Council* (especially *Apostolicum actuositatem* and *Gaudium et spes.*) may also have led to an increased awareness of practical, social matters in Catholic circles, which in turn may have spread to interreligious circles. In fact, it seems as if the social engagement in the *interreligious* organisations has come from the social engagement emerging from confessional communities: in several of the former colonies, religions were used in anti-colonial nationalistic activities in the period after the First World War, for example Islam in the Arabic countries. During the 1960s 'liberation theology' became a force to reckon with in Latin America, and this movement was based on Catholicism (Haynes 1998:16). Another example of how the religious concern with social problems is a trend which has grown during the last decades is the 'engaged Buddhism' movement, founded during the 1960s (Fleming 2002:36 f.) and manifested in the *Christian Worker's Fellowship* and the *All Ceylon Peasant Movement* in Sri Lanka, working at the grassroot level (Mendis 2002:43 f.). The situation was thus that the first socially engaged religious movements were not interreligious, just as at the same time the interreligious activities were concerned about religious matters, not social challenges. The combining of the two aspects into the socially engaged interreligious movements occurred during the last decades of the 20th century.

Another trait of the early interreligious activities was that the interreligious initiatives were often spurred by religious lay-individuals, not the religious leaders. This changed most notably with the founding of *World Conference on Religion and Peace* (WCRP), which was the last of the four major international, interreligious organisations (Braybrooke 1992:2). The WCRP was highly oriented towards practical issues, and based on engaging the religious *leaders*. The organisation had its first meeting in 1966 where over five hundred religious leaders and adherents participated. It was founded by a small group of religious leaders from

Boston with the purpose of bringing together religious leaders to discuss and promote peace and conflict-resolutions, drawing inspiration from the religious traditions. One of the four points in its declaration is “[t]o analyze existing religious programmes in Washington, at the UN, on the local level, and in the world community, and to recommend further co-operation so that organized religion can play its role in governmental decisions affecting war and peace” (Braybrooke 1992:132 f.). Here one clearly can see the anti-secular practical aim. This organisation was aiming at bringing religions together to cooperate on practical issues, not primarily to engage in theological discussions. The less practically oriented interreligious dialogues that preceded the organisation had been crucial in breaking down the suspicion and alienation between the religions. However, by shifting the aim of the dialogues from the spiritual to the practical, WCRP also served as a criticism of the previous interreligious agencies (Braybrooke 1992:2,133). In the years following, the focus on increasing WCRP’s presence at the UN and “other international conferences” became stronger, and WCRP was given consultative status in Category II by the *United Nations Economic and Social Council* (ECOSOC) in 1973. Today it has grown into one of the world’s most respected interreligious international organisation.

In an international society where religious bodies had become limited and lost considerable influence compared to earlier, it would be natural to assume that the anti-secular tendencies emerging in the international society were welcomed heartily. A number of interreligious dialogues had already proven that religions could be used in peaceful ways. But in order for religion to break out of its marginal position in society, it would be necessary to establish a closer cooperation between the various organisations and agencies already existing. Scattered, they were too weak to make an impact. In the middle of the 1980s several networks were made. In 1986 and 1987 the *North American Interfaith Network* (NAIN) and the *Inter Faith Network for the United Kingdom* were founded (internet2), and in 1983 the first *Ammerdown meeting* was held between the WCF and the ToU, where the organisations tried to find out how they could best cooperate. Two years later they met again, this time joined also by IARF, WCRP, *World Thanksgiving*, ICCJ, the *Week of Prayer for World Peace*, and several regional organisations and group. They were mostly Western, since other representatives had problems raising the money to participate. It was discussed what should be termed ‘interreligious organisation’ and what should not, and the majority agreed that the funding had to come from more than one religious community in order for the organisation to be *interreligious*. They also agreed on starting to plan how they could mark the centenary of the 1893 Parliament. During the meeting, John Taylor from the WCRP held a speech drawing attention to how the

international interreligious organisations would benefit by cooperating, not competing. They had various goals and projects in progress, but noted that the number of interreligious bodies still remained small compared to the confessional ones, who operated out of one religious tradition. His last point was that the dialogues they engaged in also should include the secular agencies (Braybrooke 1992:298 f.). Then, in 1988, another Ammerdown meeting was held, with representatives from IARF, ToU, WCF, WCRP, WCC, ICCJ, the *United Church of Canada*, and some other observers participating. Further plans were made for the 1993 commemoration, and the four interreligious organisations IARF, ToU, WCF and WCRP agreed to cooperate on the organisationing of several events. This would not form a new organisational structure, but a network, which in addition to the 1993 events also would work toward a strengthening of the activities at the UN and the addressing of the social challenges. The Christian anti-secularism of 1893 had now become *interreligious* anti-secularism. During the following years up to 1993 the four bodies met several times, making plans concerning events which would take place in Bangalore and New Dehli, India. They formed the *International Interfaith Organizations Co-ordinating Committee* (IIOC), and invited the *Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions* (CPWR), the organiser of the second Parliament which would be held in Chicago, to present their plans there in order to coordinate the events (Braybrooke 1992:302 ff.). In other words, it was the planning of the events in 1993, the *Year of Interreligious Understanding and Cooperation*, that led to the formation of this international interreligious network. Still, it is prudent to ask critically how international these organisations really are. The four who formed the IIOC were founded in the West, and it is natural that the non-Western representatives who participated favoured the Western-based organisations' conceptions and goals.

Summary

The World's Parliament of Religions in 1893 was marked by a strong essentialistic Christian triumphalism and addressed the problem of secularity. During the following one hundred years, religious pluralism in the West increased, and interreligious dialogues and activities rose both in number and magnitude. The modern paradigm of secularity was weakened, and events proved that religion was able to break out of the marginal position it had in the international society. Some of the international interreligious organisations came together, forming the IIOC, on the basis of the events they would organise together in 1993. In this chapter I have shown, then, how both the aim for peaceful interreligious pluralism and the aim for anti-

secularity are founded on historical processes, and how both the levels can be based on a practical approach to social problems. In the following chapters I will show how these practical levels have been manifested through the later Parliaments.

CHAPTER 3: THE PARLIAMENT IN 1993

You walk into a garden and you see all of these different flowers. Some of them you know and you're going to bend down to smell their fragrance, and then there's that one over there that looks OK, but you're not really sure that it's not going to make you itch. You hesitate, maybe you ask somebody else, before you have the courage to [approach it] (Buchanan, Barcelona 2004).

Introduction

In this part of the paper I will show how the Parliament in 1993 can be interpreted as an attempt to create a harmonious co-existence in a religiously pluralistic society, as well as the first step in the interreligious anti-secular strategy, marked by a Western majority of participants. By referring to the world problems from an interreligious, peaceful position, the religious community could show the international secular society a non-threatening image of itself. The way this was done was to use the notion of 'ethic' and to use the reference to the transcendent reality as an inspiration to support the human rights and the world ecology. This second Parliament's main focus was the interreligious dialogues and relations, and this was the necessary first step to make religion into a united subsystem. The discourse dominating the Parliament was essentialistic by the fact that the religions were perceived as unities around different, but overlapping, world-views and values, and it was performative by the fact that the overlap consisted of this-worldly concerns regarding human suffering and problems.

3.1 Chicago

The second Parliament took place one hundred years after the first meeting in 1893. The name was changed from the *World's Parliament of Religions* to the *Parliament of the World's Religions*. It was organised by the *Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions* (CPWR), which officially dates from 1988 when two monks from the *Vivekananda Vedanta Society* of Chicago suggested organising a centennial celebration of the 1893 Parliament (internet4). The members of the CPWR all came from various religious communities in Chicago. Chicago is an extremely multi-cultural city where many of the inhabitants are first-generation

immigrants, so it was possible to gather representatives from quite a few communities (Spector, Barcelona 2004). Each of the participating religions could choose how they would like to represent themselves, but they were encouraged to invite representatives from the whole world. The idea from the Parliament in 1893 that the participants would not be official representatives for their religious communities, but come as individual practitioners, was continued. The religions were thus not 'officially' represented by leaders or spokespersons, but were represented by the members who took part in the gathering (Küng and Kuschel 1993:83). However, the religious communities were invited to finance the Parliament so the communities could become official sponsors, which led to certain controversies. The Ahmadiyya community offered to donate money, but as many do not consider it to be a part of the orthodox islam, several other Muslim communities threatened to withdraw their sponsorships if the offer was accepted. As a result the CPWR was pressured to not accept the Ahmadiyya offerings (Spector, Barcelona 2004). Another conflict that took place concerned the Pagan group *Covenant of the Goddess*, who performed a moon ritual. The incident sparked disagreements between the Orthodox Christians as the leader of the Orthodox Christians from Chicago withdrew in protest, but the leader of the Greek Orthodox community stayed (Benson, Barcelona 2004). These incidents reflected the intrareligious differences, but the goal in 1993 was to highlight the *interreligious similarities*. The message dominating the whole event was the argument promulgated by Hans Küng: "No survival without a world ethic. No world peace without peace between religions. No peace between religions without dialogue between the religions" (Küng 1991:xv).

3.1.1 Sessions and presenters

The first modern Parliament was held from the 28th of August to the 5th of September 1993. More than 8000²⁵ (Request for Proposals 2001:65) people from all religions and all parts of the world gathered in Chicago. The event took place in *Palmer House Hilton Hotel*, and one of the participants describes the experience in this way:

One was pressing, bumping, and rubbing against literally dozens of people from every part of the world in making one's way across the lobby, exchanging touches, exchanging scents, exchanging looks, all in a sea of frothing, bubbling languages. This was the immersion experience, and it became a daily ritual. Here one lost much of one's separateness and became part of a larger collective life (Cunningham 1996:39).

²⁵ The number of participants is very unclear, as some sources say 6500 while others say up to 8700.

The opening and closing ceremonies enabled Buddhists, Muslims, Christians and Hindus to pray side by side, and rituals and dance numbers were performed by Priestesses of Isis, Sufis, American Indians and Catholic pastors (Thelle 1994:46 f.). As opposed to the first Parliament, the more traditional Christian religions held a lower profile, and at first sight the unconventional religions stood out with their dresses and ceremonies. Cardinal Joseph Bernadin was almost the only high-ranking Christian leader present (Braybrooke, Barcelona 2004). In fact, for many of the smaller religious groups present, the participation in the Parliament provided an opportunity to be seen, recognised and acknowledged (Benson, Barcelona 2004). The New Age groups and the high-priestess of Isis in particular stood out from the crowd, and have been mentioned later several places (Thelle 1994:50, Küng and Kuschel 1993:94 f.). What the participants met was, in other words, something similar to a religious supermarket where all kinds of religious traditions were presented as equals, and no nonnegotiable was presented as superior to others. There was a religious pluralism which could be perceived as a functional relativism, one of the traits also found in the New Age movement.

Of the total 8000 registrants at the Parliament, 4800 came from USA, and the remaining 3200 were international (Request for Proposals 2001:65). That may explain why the number of Christian sessions clearly outnumbered the others, with 117 sessions of a total of 639²⁶. The next largest was Hinduism, although they had only about half as many (62) sessions. The next largest was Islam with 37 sessions, and thereafter the other religions followed close up²⁷. However, the number of sessions did not necessarily reflect the number of presenters representing the various religions²⁸. Even though the Christians had the highest number of presenters as well, the number of Islamic presenters was much higher than the Hindus. The number of Sikhs and Native American presenters also exceeded the number of the sessions considerably, as each session had several representatives participating. The presenters' geographical background could explain why the sessions were divided according to religions as they were. The number of Western presenters (first and foremost from USA²⁹) was 186 out of 353. Of the remaining presenters with non-Western names, 78 had a clear connection to the West, many of them professors at Western universities. This category I have called 'Mixed'

²⁶ I have here counted the sessions under the categories 'Major Presentations' and 'Seminars and Lectures', as these two clearly constituted the main part of the program presented. The remaining sessions of seminars, symposiums etc. constituted 186. For a full overview, see *Appendix: 1*.

²⁷ See *Appendix: 1*.

²⁸ See *Appendix: 2*. I have only counted an extract of the total number of presenters. See *Appendix: Method of analysis*.

²⁹ Which I have called 'USA' or 'Western'. See *Appendix: Method of analysis*.

because of the indications that the presenters had a background of several cultural traditions³⁰. One nationality which stood out from the non-Western presenters was the Indians. Not counting those with a strong Western background (who I count among the 'Mixed' 78), they constituted 54 presenters. It seems as if only 16 presenters in total had no clear tie to the West, according to the information in the Program book 1993.

When it comes to the New Age participants, a very large number of the sessions could not clearly be distinguished as connected to any of the known world religions. In the Program book the sessions were described in very vague terms, such as 'spirituality', 'true essence', etc. Remembering how loose the New Age movement is, it is hard to categorise these sessions. However, 16 could clearly be recognised as 'New Age', while also in the large number of 'Unclear', 125 sessions, most of these could probably also be called 'New Age'³¹. Connected as New Age is to the esoteric traditions, 22 sessions could also be identified as 'Theosophical/Anthropological'³².

What the numbers show is that the presenters in the categories 'USA' and 'Western' clearly outnumbered all the others, which also may explain the high number of Christians and New Age sessions. However, the number of 'Mixed' was also considerable, but these presenters represented a great variety of religions, so no one religion was particularly favoured by this group. Noticeable is the fact that there were extremely few of these who represented Christianity. After 'Mixed', the Indians were the next in line, and they often represented Hinduism, which explains the high number of Hindu sessions. None of the explicitly 'Non-Western' presenters represented Christianity³³. In this regard the numbers showing a Western majority among the participants of the Parliament still lingered from the first one in 1893, although the dominance was not nearly so overwhelming, and the triumphalistic Christian aspect had disappeared from the agenda and been replaced by a more religiously pluralistic or universal one. There were very few representatives of the more conservative or exclusivistic camps. A number of more exclusivistic religious adherents were present outside the building, solely to protest against the amiable pluralistic event that took place. But among the thousands of people who participated the atmosphere was ecumenical, enthusiastic and energetic, although perhaps a bit chaotic and overwhelming (Thelle 1994:46 f.).

³⁰ See *Appendix: Method of analysis*.

³¹ See *Appendix: Method of analysis and I*.

³² For more on the esoteric tradition and participation of the 1993 Parliament, see Roberts 1995:121 f.

³³ See *Appendix:2*.

As there were more than 800 sessions available for the participants to choose between, it is almost impossible to categorise them according to clear-cut topics. However, one common feature runs through the whole program, and that is the absence of intrareligious topics. The sessions either presented one religion's view of a topic, according to the presenter's perception, or several religions expressed similar views in a session where representatives of various religions participated. But no sessions took account of the differences *within* a religion. No sessions were, for example, participated in by both a Zen Buddhist presenter and a Theravadian Buddhist presenter. A session with both a Protestant Christian and a Catholic Christian was also hard to find. There was a bigger chance of finding a session where both a Zen Buddhist and a Protestant Christian participated. But given the fact that the Parliament primarily was focused on the *interreligious* meetings, the absence of intrareligious sessions is understandable. Still, it may seem strange that the religious 'unities' (Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism etc.) did not first unite internally before they reached out in companionship towards other 'unities'.

The putting together of the Parliament program was a process of systematising over thirteen hundred proposals sent in by fifteen religions. The proposals were selected and arranged by representatives of the various religions in the *Host Committees*, and it was an enormous task to register, evaluate and make room for each session (Bernstein 1996:48). Every day started at 7.00 with meditations, and ended with thematic plenaries which started at 20.00. In addition to the ordinary sessions taking place throughout the day, the participants could also take part in week-long series of thematic plenaries, workshops and symposia, in addition to films, concerts, etc. The 1993 Parliament program encouraged the participants to get to know the various religions, but quite a few rather went to the sessions held by their own religious communities (Benson, Barcelona 2004). A reason for this may have been the unfamiliar situation of meeting so many 'religious others' and that it felt safer to meet participants in the category 'religious us'. It was exactly these encounters between different religious adherents in a pluralistic environment which was the theme running through the Parliament, and the religious performance as the meeting place for these encounters became the main focus.

3.1.2 The religious performance on religious pluralism at the Parliament

The Parliament was marked by a high diversity of participants, and the CPWR had organised several arrangements for people to get to know each other. Over four days the *Parliament of the People* was held during lunch, and this was the time for the participants to express their

opinions and impressions of what was going on, through the opportunity to address the Parliament by lining up to address those present. Another opportunity to connect with each other was provided by using the computers. The *TogetherNet* seminar offered the participants free software and user instructions in order to maintain contact with the others (Bernstein 1996:48 ff.). The stages of introducing oneself and talking to the other participants in the dialogue was a distinguishing feature of this first of the modern Parliaments: Presentation of one's own identity and knowledge of the other. Identity was in this context connected to which religious 'unity' one was a member of. In other words, which essentialistic nonnegotiables one identified oneself with. But the reason for engaging in the interreligious dialogues was not only to compare faiths and doctrines, as much of the earlier interreligious dialogues had been focused on during the last hundred years. The reason was rather the more socially concerned element mentioned in the previous chapter, as seen in the WCRP. What, according to Roberts, the Parliament was able to do was "both to admit a truly extreme heterogeneity and complexity of space and signs [...] and then to assimilate them [...] under a single global agenda (Roberts 1995:132).

In today's global society where the different subsystems are separate (health, law, economics, politics etc.), they have to serve specialised functions in order to legitimate their existence. Religion, made into one subsystem alongside others by Western secularisation, has the specific function of connecting man to the spiritual. Non-spiritual matters have become the arena for other subsystems. The transcendent, other-worldly is religion's 'niche', so when religion is concerned with the spiritual matters, it is *functional*. However, religion can also be applied to matters which lie within the realm of the other subsystems. By using religion in this way it becomes *performative* by dealing with mundane and non-spiritual problems (Beyer 1994:55 f., 80). When religion is used as a source of inspiration to draw from in the attempt to make the world a better place to live on, it becomes 'applied' or 'performative'. By analysing the Parliament it is clear that the whole agenda was infused with the performative aspect of religion. The whole underlying point seems to have been: 'No world peace without dialogue between the religions'.

Despite the extensive range of subjects touched upon in the sessions, I have separated them into two types according to whether they were functional or performative, based on the information given about the sessions in the Program book. By analysing the topics treated in the sessions in the 'Major Presentations' and 'Seminars and Lectures', one can see that the

sessions with a performative nature outnumbered the functional ones (392 versus 247)³⁴.

However, the purely 'functional' and purely 'performative' can be looked at as extremes on a scale, and in between there are shades of grey. In addition, it is quite possible that the information provided in the Program book does not accurately describe the session. The sessions' functional topics described in the program may often have led directly to discussions of the topics' performative practicality, a fact known only to those who participated at the session³⁵.

It is important not only to consider the sessions submitted by the presenters, but perhaps even more crucially, to look at the agenda evident in the structure and language of the program of the Parliament. What is noticeable is a clear focus on how interreligious dialogues should be used to obtain peaceful co-existence between people from different religions in a religiously pluralistic society, and further, that interreligious cooperation should be used to improve the condition of the world. The mission statement of the CPWR states that the goals are "To promote understanding and cooperation among religious communities and institutions", "To encourage the spirit of harmony and to celebrate, with openness and mutual respect, the rich diversity of religions", and "To assess and to renew the role of the religions of the world in relation to personal spiritual growth and to the critical issues and challenges facing the global community" (Program book 1993:4). Also, in the letters in the beginning of the Program book one can read: "[M]ostly we ask that you come to share, to learn, to enter into dialogue with others and to seek with others ways to overcome conflict and ways to nurture and heal our world and its people", "Because strength and consciousness arise from the spirit, the world's faiths are central to our hopes of protecting Earth and living peacefully together", "Now we know from experience how collaboration brings understanding and love, bridging the distance between our many different origins, cultures and faiths [...]", "Let it become the impetus for a renewal of dedication and commitment to positive change benefiting all women and men in our world community", and "It was difficult to convince anyone that the religions of the world could ever agree to gather to celebrate their diversity and to face together the critical issues that challenge us all at the threshold of the 21st century. And yet now the Parliament of the World's Religions is about to begin" (Program book 1993:9-12). All this shows the extent to which the Parliament was meant to be a meeting-place for religions to collaborate on practical matters.

³⁴ See *Appendix: I*.

³⁵ See *Appendix: Method of analysis* to read how I classified the statistics.

Lastly, the performative aspect and the stages of the interreligious collaborations are clear in the descriptions of the *Plenary Sessions* on the program. The first *Opening Plenary* marked the start of the Parliament. The opening ceremony presented a number of religions through a procession, and by giving performances and blessings by various religious representatives. In other words; the religious pluralism was presented visually. The following plenary *Interfaith Understanding* was on the question “Why is a gathering of this nature so vital to our common future?” Here there was a move from the initial stage of presentation and coming together to the stage of acting together. The later 5 plenary sessions focused on “[C]halleng[ing] and sanctify[ing] the Earth”, “Inspiring affirmations – as well as provocative challenges from the worlds of science and social justice – [which] will encourage Parliament participants to focus on what can be achieved through cooperation and respect for the sacredness of all life”, “[C]ritical issues of the earth, development, education, health, and the future of human communities and world cities”, “Material [which] will reflect the myths, symbols, and rituals called upon us to help us to heal discord, and restore our commitment to peace on this planet”, and “[A]n introduction to the goals of community-building, dialogue, conflict resolution, and interfaith multi-cultural collaboration”. One of the sessions was focused on the more functional aspect: “What is the Inner Life? What is spirituality? What are some of the major pathways to spiritual growth? How do the approaches of the great traditions differ? How do they converge? What are the varieties of the spiritual search?”. But this session was followed the next day by a session asking: “Does my spirituality, my ‘inner life’ encourage me to reach out to others, to the community, to the larger world?”³⁶ (Program book 1993:21-24). In other words, the spiritual *should* be used on practical matters.

What we see here is *religions* as *unities* meeting and making relationships to each other on the interreligious level by using the performative tool which Knitter calls the ‘ethical-practical bridge’. The ethical-practical bridge is a way of finding mutual points of references which different religions can agree and cooperate on. Instead of looking within or beneath the various traditions to find those theological points, the trick is rather to look *around* them and face the problems and the needs in the world. All religions are concerned with human suffering, and that is a point they all can agree on (Knitter 2003:134 ff.). However, acting upon this common ground is dependent on trust and tolerance of the ‘religious other’ one is cooperating with. According to Richard H. Roberts, it was the universalist religious discourse

³⁶ The titles of the plenaries were *Opening Plenary*, *Interfaith Understanding*, *What shall we do?*, *Visions of Paradise and Possibility*, *Voices of the Dispossessed*, *Spirit and Tradition*, *From Vision to Action: Celebrating Dialogue*, *The Inner Life*, and *The Inner Life and Life in the Community*.

emphasising the need for a shared global responsibility that explained why the Parliament became such a success (Roberts 1995:124). However, because of its universalistic approach to religious pluralism the Parliament attracted mostly open-minded religious participants. As the category ‘us’ was expanded to include also those of other religions, the alienation of the ‘religious other’ disappeared. This attitude is in itself quite different from the attitude promoted by religious exclusivists, and a small number of the more exclusivist participants were rather negative to the event, such as some Protestant Christians. They refused to accept the universal relativity their nonnegotiables were faced with in the demand for tolerance and accept of other religions (Roberts 1995:127). So this idea of a need to change the world which everybody could agree on, despite the differences in functional truths, became a performative absolutism, another trait of the New Age movement. It may seem as if the New Age characteristics became helpful tools which the interreligious parties used to make the encounters easier. However, for the Parliament to have religious authority, it also had to be perceived as representative of religious authenticity. Therefore, the participation of respected religious leaders of the world religions at the event was important.

What has been described so far was the program which was open to all the participants, also the ‘grassroot’ level. Here the religious plurality was celebrated, and the tool to co-exist together was the religious social concern everybody shared. But as the program director of the Parliament comments, there was a clear infrastructure of power at the conference, and a hierarchy of VIPs was visible at the plenaries and sessions (Bernstein 1996:55). In addition to the open program, there was also an Assembly taking place during the Parliament’s last days which was open only for the “religious and spiritual leaders” (Program book 1993:19) . And it is the outcomes of this Assembly which have been given the most attention in the years following the 1993 Parliament.

3.2 The Declaration Toward a Global Ethic

3.2.1 The structure of the document

The CPWR had planned the 1993 Parliament over several years, and in addition to organising a massive interreligious international event, they also wanted it to result in a ‘legacy’ (Spector, Barcelona 2004). The CPWR wanted a brief and powerful ethical statement that could be presented to the media afterwards, and it was decided to contact Hans Küng, who had worked on the concept of a common, global ethic on several occasions (Küng and Kuschel 1993:46 ff.). Küng worked out several points he thought should be included in the

document. These were, however, too lengthy and detailed, so Thomas A. Baima and Daniel Gómez-Ibáñez drafted the shorter *Introduction* in the document, and Küng the *Principles* (Baima 1996:143 ff.). After several years of corrections, comments and translations, the document *Declaration Toward a Global Ethic*³⁷ (DTGE) was approved by CPWR's Board of Trustees. The 15 page document³⁸ was presented during the Parliament Assembly where 300 religious leaders and academics participated (Request for Proposals 2001:65). However, the manner in which this was done was later severely criticised. The initial plan was to present it prior to the meeting to the religious leaders who participated. This did not happen as the CPWR withheld the document until the end of the Parliament as a 'conclusion', and then presented it only to the delegates in the Assembly gathering for signing. At this point, the document could not be changed, only discussed. Protests regarding to the procedure and presentation of the DTGE were raised, and several points in it were highly debated. Disagreements broke out especially on the points concerning non-violence in situations of self-defence, equality among the sexes, and what was perceived to be a Western bias to the whole document (Küng and Kuschel 1993:66 ff.) In the end, most of the delegates signed the document when the title was changed to *Toward a Global Ethic: An Initial Declaration*³⁹ (internet5. All the following page-references to the document are based on this version). After a short *Introduction* (DTGE:2-3), the *Principles* start with a statement (DTGE:4), and then consists of four parts. I will here present the titles of the parts and a summary of the points where there is no title:

- I. "No new global order without a new global ethic!" (DTGE:5 f.)
- II. "A fundamental demand: Every human being must be treated humanely" (DTGE:6 ff.)

"We do not wish to gloss over or ignore the serious differences among the individual religions. However, they should not hinder us from proclaiming publicly those things *which we already hold in common* and which we jointly affirm [...]. [R]eligions are credible only when they eliminate those conflicts which spring from the religions themselves, dismantling mutual arrogance, mistrust,

³⁷ The document is referred to both as *Declaration Toward a Global Ethic* and *Declaration Towards a Global Ethic* (with *s*). I will here use the first, since this was the title presented at the Parliament 1993, and it seems to be the title which has been mostly used.

³⁸ According to the version on internet5.

³⁹ The document can be found as a pdf-document on www.cpwr.org/resource.ethic.pdf (internet5). The document in reference internet5 does not bear the added *An Initial Declaration*, but it is still the same document. I will continue to refer to it as 'DTGE'.

prejudice, and even hostile images, and thus demonstrate respect for the traditions [...] of people who believe differently.

III. *"Irrevocable directives"*

1. *"Commitment to a culture of non-violence and respect for life"* (DTGE:8 f.)

A: *"You shall not kill!" & "Have respect for life!"*

B: "Conflicts should be resolved without violence within a framework of justice. Persons who hold political power must work within the framework of a just order and commit themselves to the most non-violent, peaceful solutions possible. [...] Armament is a mistaken path [...]."

C: "Young people must learn [a] *culture of non-violence*"

D: All life, also the *"lives of animals and plants"* is *"intertwined together"*.

E: Tolerance and respect must be shown to everybody both publicly and privately.

2. *"Commitment to a culture of solidarity and a just economic order"* (DTGE:9 ff.)

A: *"You shall not steal!" & "Deal honestly and fairly!"*

B: Extreme differences between rich and poor lead to a circle of violence

C: "Young people must learn" the obligation of doing good for building a just economic order.

D: The world economy must be structured more justly

E: Attitudes of domination, power and greed for material wealth should be replaced by humanity, mutual respect and moderation."

3. *"Commitment to a culture of tolerance and a life of truthfulness"* (DTGE:11 f.)

A: *"You shall not lie!" & "Speak and act truthfully!"*

B: "Truthfulness is particularly important for the mass media, artists, writers and scientists, politicians and political parties, and representatives of religion.

C: Young people must learn to think, speak and act truthfully.

D: To be human, truthfulness must be cultivated, sought and served.

4. *"Commitment to a culture of equal rights and partnership between men and women"* (DTGE:12 f.)

A: *"You shall not commit sexual immorality!" & "Respect and love one another!"*

B: Sexual exploitation and discrimination is degrading, and is not tolerated.

C: “Young people must learn [...] that sexuality is not a negative, destructive, or exploitative force, but creative and affirmative.”

D: The relationship between the sexes should be respectful, and sexuality should express a loving relationship between equal partners. “Voluntary renunciation also can be an expression of identity and meaningful fulfillment.”

E: Marriage and family are institutions which should protect love, mutual support and respect between husband, wife and children.

F: Patriarchal domination and degradation are the opposites of humanly partnership, love and mutual respect.

IV. “*A transformation of consciousness*” (DTGE:13 f.)

1. A consensus on ethical questions in areas such as mass media, science, economy and politics will be difficult to attain, but it can be obtained “in the spirit of the fundamental principles we have jointly developed here.”
2. “[W]e would be pleased if as many *professions* as possible, such as those of physicians, scientists, bussiness people, journalists, and politicians, would develop up-to-date *codes of ethics* which would provide specific guidelines for [...] these particular professions.

[W]e urge the *various communities of faith* to formulate their very *specific ethics* [...]”

3.2.2 The religious performance on anti-secularism in the DTGE

What one can find in the DTGE is the same religious performance as seen in the whole Parliament discourse. The *Introduction* starts with a paragraph expressing social concerns:

The world is in agony. The agony is so pervasive and urgent that we are compelled to name its manifestations so that the depth of this pain may be clear. [...] This is abhorrent. We condemn the abuses of Earth’s eco-systems. We condemn the poverty that stifles life’s potential [...]. We condemn the social disarray of the nations [...]. But this agony need not be (DTGE:2).

Similarly the beginning of the *Principles* states:

Hundreds of millions of human beings on our planet increasingly suffer from unemployment, poverty, hunger, and the destruction of their families. [...] It is increasingly difficult to live together peacefully in our cities because of social, racial, and ethnic conflicts, the abuse of drugs, organized crime, and even anarchy. [...] Our planet continues to be ruthlessly plundered (DTGE:4).

Thus, even though the religious pluralism and the differences between the various religions was clear in the document, there was a stronger emphasis placed on the uniting principles *shared* by all religions than in the themes running through the Parliament program in general:

We affirm that a common set of core values is found in the teachings of the religions, and that these form the basis of a global ethic (DTGE:2).

We are persons who have committed ourselves to the precepts and practices of the world's religions. We confirm that there is already a consensus among the religions which can be the basis for a global ethic – a minimal *fundamental consensus* concerning binding *values*, irrevocable *standards*, and *fundamental moral attitudes* (DTGE:4).

We women and men of various religions and regions of Earth therefore address all people, religious and non-religious. We wish to express the [...] convictions which we hold in common: [...] As *religious* and *spiritual persons* we base our lives on an Ultimate Reality, and draw spiritual power and hope therefrom, in trust, in prayer or meditation, in word or silence (DTGE:5).

There is a principle which is found and has persisted in many religious and ethical traditions of humankind for thousands of years: *What you do not wish done to yourself, do not do to others*. Or in positive terms: *What you wish done to yourself, do to others* (DTGE:7)!

This infers that all the religions basically promote the same values and principles, and gives the impression of making the religions into one religious unity: 'Religion'. The overlapping religious social concern can be seen as a common essence in the whole of religion as a subsystem: Ethic is the essence of religion. That makes it possible for religion as one subsystem to turn towards other subsystems. This is another point that distinguishes the DTGE from the rest of the Parliament theme, that there is mention of the non-religious subsystems in connection with the social concerns:

Our world is experiencing a *fundamental crisis*: A crisis in global economy, global ecology, and global politics. The lack of a grand vision, the tangle of unresolved problems, political paralysis, mediocre political leadership with little insight or foresight, and in general too little sense for the commonweal [sic?] are seen everywhere: Too many old answers to new challenge (DTGE:4).

[A]ll over the world we find endless lies, and deceit, swindling and hypocrisy, ideology and demagoguery: *Politicians and business people who use lies as a means to success; *Mass media which spreads ideological propaganda [...]; *Scientists and researchers who give themselves over to morally programs [...] (DTGE:11).

What we see here is that the performative religion explicitly describes the *residual*⁴⁰ problems which are created by the other subsystems, but apparently not solved by them (Beyer 1997:4). But at the same time, the document offers the before mentioned ‘global ethic’ as an essential resource within the religions that can transform the current situation:

We recall the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations. What is formally proclaimed on the level of *rights* we wish to confirm and deepen here from the perspective of an *ethic* [...]. [A] better global order cannot be created or enforced by laws, prescriptions and conventions alone; [...] [T]he realization of peace, justice, and the protection of Earth depends on the insight and readiness of men and women to act justly [...]. [R]ights without morality cannot long endure, and [...] *there will be no better global order without a global ethic* (DTGE:5 f.).

We know that religions cannot solve the environmental, economic, political, and social problems of Earth. However they can provide what obviously cannot be attained by economic plans, political programs, or legal regulations alone: A *change* in the ‘*hearts*’ of *people*, and a conversion from a false path to a new orientation for life (DTGE:7).

The basic elements were the same in the DTGE as in the rest of the Parliament: A shared religious social concern despite religious differences. But in the DTGE the engaged interreligious cooperation took the step up to the *systemic* level. The sessions in the program open to all participants also focused on these issues. Examples were the *Near-Death Experience as a Basis for Religious Unity*, where again the religions were considered to be based on the same principles, *Spiritual Dimensions of Health and Healing*, which addresses the health system, and *Islamic Solutions to the Moral/Social Crisis in the World*, where religion offers the world the solution to its social problems (Program book, Chicago 1993:88 f.) But the sessions were too limited to contain all the elements seen in the DTGE in one, and the presenters participating in the various sessions did not represent the whole spectrum of religions *en masse* as the religious leaders in the Assembly seemed to do.

In order for religion to be perceived as indispensable in the international society, it has to offer something which the secular subsystems lack (Beyer 1994:80). As shown in the DTGE, religions are concerned with the concept of *ethic*, and by indirectly suggesting that the world’s suffering is caused by the other subsystems’ lack of ethic, religion can show its indispensability in realms other than the purely spiritual. By using ethic, religion becomes all-encompassing by dealing with non-religious issues by referring to religious tenets. In this way, religious performance can be used as a strategy for religion to break out of the private,

⁴⁰ As presented on page 16, section 1.5.

marginalised situation it has in the secular international society. To achieve this, religion has to appear non-threatening and as a supporter of the values endorsed in this society. Following this argumentation, ethic becomes religion's core essence in a discourse of essentialism. Religion is often associated with violence, xenophobia and non-tolerance, in other words the 'non-systemic' values (Beyer 1994:99), so in order for religion to be accepted as an equal partner by the other subsystems, it has to endorse equality, freedom and peace. As stated in DTGE II:

Of course religions are credible only when they eliminate those conflicts which spring from religions themselves, dismantling mutual arrogance, mistrust, prejudice, and even hostile images, and thus demonstrate respect for the traditions, holy places, feasts, and rituals of people who believe differently (DTGE:7).

By admitting the 'wrong-doing' religion can cause and by rejecting this 'false' religion, the DTGE washes its hands clean of that which causes religion to be rejected in a secular society.

When it comes to the language in the document, there are two interesting points worth noting: Firstly, the formulations have to take into consideration both the religious differences, and the non-religious systems. The DTGE is a religious document which nonetheless refers to social problems, human problems, and ecological problems, and the text is pragmatic rather than theological. By addressing the non-secular society and the other subsystems, the religious subsystem also has to adapt their language. That is probably why the document is written in a *rights-language*, and is structured in much the same way as international declarations. The international society endorses values such as democracy, peace and freedom, and the main human rights (which also is referred to in the DTGE), so the DTGE adopts the character of a UN document. The DTGE starts with an *Introduction* where the intention and the goal is stated in several points starting with "We condemn [...]", "We affirm [...]" "We declare [...]", and so on (DTGE:2 f.). In this way, those who signed the document expressed a shared conviction in the motivation behind the subsequent sections.

Secondly, the document combines the declaration language with a cross-religious language. The reason for the absence of particular theological issues is that if there had been any references to religious terms or concepts, it would have increased the risk that believers of some religions and spiritual traditions would not have wanted to sign the document (Küng and Kuschel 1993:53 ff.). It refers to the *Golden Rule* in part II as a common principle shared by all religions (Küng and Kuschel 1993:71 f.), and also mentions 'spirituality' and 'religions' as a common identity. This is what Scott Appleby refers to as 'second-order religious language',

which is “a common cross-cultural vocabulary that facilitates dialogue while remaining true to the primary theological claims of each participating community” (Appleby 2000:151).

By supporting human rights, religion affirms its non-threatening nature towards secular international society and its argument about how religion is needed in order to solve the world’s agony. The document is based on a constantly underlying assumption that human rights need to be founded in religious convictions for them to have real implications. This argumentation is supported by Joseph Runzo who claims that because human rights as stated in the UDHR do not have roots in religious convictions, there are therefore not many who endorse them or are devoted to them. Most people are acquiescent, and not many actually oppose them, but as most of the world’s population is religious, human rights lack a profound resonance from with people base their lives upon. Runzo is of the opinion that the argument that religious norms and values could serve as a necessary support for human rights, is a wise one. In that way human rights would gain more validity and authority among people (Runzo 2001:34 f.).

The weakness of using performative, socially engaged religion is that it is a strategy supported more by the more liberal religious adherents (inclusivists, pluralists and accepters) than the conservative (exclusivists) because of the universal values it stands for (Beyer 1994:219). The percentage of leaders from the conservative branches who signed was rather small, and the majority of the delegates at the Assembly were representatives of the liberal and progressive wings (King 1998:129). When reading the DTGE it is possible to ascertain the reason for this, as it repeatedly confirms all religion’s shared ethical values. For those who firmly believe in their own religion’s unique nonnegotiables, this attitude may seem uncomfortable. In addition, religious interpretations of human rights are not always in harmony with the UN interpretation of them, since the latter often is considered to be too Western and individualistic. This may also have been a reason why the delegates were mostly from the liberal, Western sides of the religions, just as most of the participants at the Parliament in general were of the more universalistic type. However, the DTGE was signed by the large majority of the delegates in the Assembly, and among them were religious representatives such as the Dalai Lama, the Cardinal of Chicago, the Vatican representative and the representative of the *World Council of Churches*, the General Secretary of the WCRP and the General Administrator of the *International Baha’i Community*, the spiritual head of the Sikhs in Amritsar, the president of the *Lutheran World Alliance*, the patriarch of the Cambodian Buddhism, a leading rabbi and an Arab sheikh (Küng and Kuschel 1993:72).

One can say that the essentialised, performative discourse used in an anti-secular agenda which was noticeable in 1893 was continued in 1993, but this time it was interreligious, not Christian. The strategy of appearing as one unified agent behind the claim of increased religious influence in a secular society remained, although it had been adapted according to the pluralistic changes taking place in the world.

3.2.3 The Declaration Toward a Global Ethic after the Parliament

After the Parliament had ended, the DTGE led to initiatives such as the *Global Ethic Foundation* (internet6), the *Global Dialogue Institute* (internet7), the *Center for Global Ethics* (internet8), the *American Ethical Union* (internet9) and the *Institute for Global Ethic* (internet10). But not all voices were positive about the outcomes. Both the Parliament and the Global Ethic were accused of being reductionistic and criticised for perceived attempts to form a new syncretistic world religion. Despite assurances that the goal was only to create harmony and collaboration between the distinct religions⁴¹, there were still those who expressed suspicion. They did not feel that the DTGE took the nonnegotiables seriously enough by only referring to the vague 'ultimate reality' which could be interpreted as replacing Allah, Jesus, Jahwe osv. It was also thought that the DTGE did not consider the different traditions and their different practices. It was considered too Western as it had been "produced in the West, using Western academic categories, through a Western committee process" (Baima 1996:148).

One of the other main concerns raised was *who* the religious representatives at the Parliament were. As already mentioned, the participants were mainly from the liberal branches of the religions. None of the sessions in the program challenged the performative, interreligious discourse of peace and collaboration, and the event could easily be seen as advocating a relativism of the varying religions' truth-claims. There was such an emphasis of universality and humankind as a big family of 'us', that it naturally attracted those more open to the 'religious others', such as the inclusivists, pluralists and accepters. This does not necessarily mean that no divergent sessions were submitted, however. The absence of more exclusivistic sessions may just as well reflect that the committee who put the program together chose not to include them. In addition, the participants were mainly of Western descent. This imbalance robbed the DTGE of the credibility it needed. Sallie King is one who saw the document as an example of how the need for intrareligious dialogue was more urgent

⁴¹ "We do not wish to gloss over or ignore the serious differences among the individual religions. However, they should not hinder us from proclaiming publicly those things *which we already hold in common* and which we jointly affirm, each on the basis of our own religious or ethical grounds" (DTGE:6).

than interreligious dialogue: “In sum, the Global Ethic is a liberal document, another piece of evidence that there is probably more unity among liberal adherents of a variety of the world’s religions than there is between liberals and conservatives of the same religion” (King 1998:130). In other words, the Parliament could be seen as universalistic and Western.

Summary

In this chapter I have shown how interreligious performance was the characteristic feature of the Parliament, and how it was based on a discourse of essentialism, both the essence of the various religions’ static nonnegotiables, and the ethical essence of the subsystem religion. Performance was used in two ways during the event: first, as a meeting place in order to make the religious pluralism encountered in society manageable, and second, by building on the rhetoric of joint religious social concern, to take it one step further and address the non-religious subsystems. The DTGE in particular showed the extent to which the participants wanted to appear as one united group, using a discourse of an essential ethic. What was overlooked at the Parliament, on the other hand, was the need for *intrareligious* dialogues.

In the Parliament program the dominance of Western presenters, and presenters connected to Western institutions, was clear compared to non-Western. The event was also dominated by universalists.

After the Parliament had taken place, the document and the event were faced with a number of critics. However, the first step had been taken in forming an apparently united interreligious subsystem, and the next step of facing the secular subsystems proceeded at the 1999 Parliament. But before that event took place, several things happened in the name of religion which are worth mentioning here.

CHAPTER 4: BETWEEN 1993 AND 1999

Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success (Henry Ford, internet11).

Introduction

In this chapter I will present some of the religious events which marked the years between the Parliament in 1993 and the next one in 1999, to give a rough picture of how religion was perceived during this time. First I will present some of the incidents which gave rise to

increased scepticism in general society regarding religion; incidents which showed the 'fundamentalistic' line. These incidents were signs of the intrareligious differences that existed. Second, I will present the continuing interreligious activities after the Parliament in 1993, and argue for why these can be looked at as an interreligious social movement. This movement also existed before 1993, but one can here see signs of an anti-secular approach more oriented towards the systemic level. Last, I will present the course taken by the CPWR after the organisation of the Parliament in 1993, and how the new projects went in two directions: towards the local pluralistic interreligious community and the towards the international systemic level.

4.1 Religious fundamentalism showing its face

Several incidents involving religion which occurred during the six years between the Parliaments in 1993 and 1999 probably affected much of society's understanding of religion, at least in the West, and those events featured in the media were often expressions of the exclusivistic religiousness which resulted in acts of violence. People became aware of what is called 'religious fundamentalism'.

The fundamentalistic incidents of the 1990s were typically marked by two characteristics: religious identity as an important element in differentiating 'us' and 'the others', and the beliefs closely linked to the approaching turn of the Millennium. The first characteristic is more important as it has led to more significant incidents later, and as many of the millennaristic groups disappeared after the year 2000.

Samuel Huntington's article *The Clash of Civilizations* was published in 1993, and stirred lively reactions in academic and political circles. He presented a theory according to which future conflicts would take place between 'civilizations', to a large degree defined by differences in religions. The 'West' is seen as an opposite to the 'Rest', especially the Muslim world, and world-views, cultures and religions are seen as likely to become points of identification which separate 'us' and 'them' (Huntington 1993). Although his theory was criticised and attacked by several scholars, the view he presented seemed to strike a chord with general society's perception of how the world was developing. In his articles in the periodical *Studies in Interreligious Dialogue* throughout the 1990s, Georg Evers does to a certain degree affirm this observation of a "certain hardening of positions developing between the major religions". He noticed a "general trend to define anew one's stance, dogmas and positions by going back to the 'sources'" (Evers 1992:180). In 1994 he pointed out that most

of the conflicts going on involved religions, in one way or another, such as the conflicts in the Balkan (Evers 1994:214). Religions' involvement in conflicts was also noted by the *InterAction Council* in 1998, which stated that religion, mixed with politics, was an important element in 25 wars during the 1990s (internet12).

Perhaps the most widely reported religious conflicts during the 1990s were the conflicts in the earlier Yugoslavia. In the Balkan conflicts Christian Orthodox Serbs, Christian Roman Catholics Croats and Muslim Bosnians fought each other in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and in Kosovo the conflict raged between the Orthodox Serbs and the Muslim Albanians (Haynes 2002:319, internet13). Incidents on a smaller scale also got considerable attention in the media. The Israel/Palestine-conflict has for decades been seen as a 'core' issue demonstrating the differences between the West and the Arab world. In 1994 the Jew Dr. Goldstein killed several Muslims in a mosque in Hebron. One year later, in 1995, Israel's prime minister Yitzhak Rabin was shot. The assassin was a fellow Jew who thought Rabin had betrayed his people in the Oslo peace process (Juergensmeyer 2000:44 ff.), but nonetheless the motivation was still marked by religion. The same year the Oklahoma City federal building was devastated by a bomb planted by Timothy McVeigh, member of the fundamentalist *Christian Identity*-group (Juergensmeyer 2000:19 ff.). In addition, several attacks by Muslims aimed towards the USA seemed to affirm the theory presented in Huntington's article. In 1993, an attempt was made to destroy the World Trade Center in New York with explosives, and the American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania were bombed in 1998, the attacks arranged by a man called Osama bin Laden (Juergensmeyer 2000:60).

In addition to these events, the approaching turn of the Millennia led to a number of religious groups marked by a strong belief in the coming of the eschatological era. In 1995 the Japanese *Aum Supreme Cult* released a deadly nerve-gas in the subways of Tokyo, killing twelve persons and injuring six thousand. This attack was supposed to unleash the beginning of Armageddon. Two years later, in 1997, incidents of mass suicides continued the 'Millennia-madness'. In California, 39 members of the *Heaven's Gate* cult drank poison, as they believed that an alien space-ship, followed by the comet Hale-Bopp, awaited them at the other side of the illusionary death and would take them away to an utopia. In the years between 1994 and 1997, 74 members of the group called the *Solar Temple* also died in mass suicides, certain that they would be re-born on Sirius, a star closely connected to their belief in Christ (internet14).

These are just a few examples that show what kind of image the society was given of religion through the media. Although very few exclusivists actually act in violent ways

described here, the few who do get a lot of attention. Based on these events the presentation of religion as a motivator for peace, harmony and tolerance was undermined. All of these incidents painted a negative picture of religion, portraying it to be dangerous, destructive and a prime engine behind conflicts, war and violence. What characterised all of these incidents was a strong belief held by those involved that they had a unique knowledge of what was right in a world of irreligion and evil, because *they* held the divine, essential truth. The fundamentalists behind these acts were of both Western and non-Western backgrounds, which shows that fundamentalism is international, and does not follow cultural lines. It is rather the way the exclusivists interpret the nonnegotiables essentialistically which makes fundamentalism. Still, it is not surprising that Georg Evers drew the conclusion that "there [was] a growing impression and conviction that precisely religions have played and play an important role in the origins of wars and struggles in every corner of the world during most of humankind's history" (Evers 1996:233).

4.2 The international interreligious social movement

When one considers all these negative images of religion, it is easy to understand that the quiet interreligious work going on aimed at building a world of solidarity and peace did not receive much attention in the media. But efforts were still underway to use religion in a positive way. The Parliament in 1993 was a big event in the religious world, and in addition the IIOC organised several events in India the same year. The 1993 *Year of interreligious understanding and cooperation* was followed by several initiatives and events. These events can be seen as evidence of the creation of an interreligious social movement connected to the performative anti-secular strategies manifested in the DTGE. To validate this argumentation one first has to define what comprises a 'social movement', and then discuss how these traits can be recognised in the interreligious activities.

4.2.1 Social movements

Several different definitions exist for 'social movements', and their characteristics. All describe collective action and mobilisation (Oberschall 1993:2 f.). Theories also agree that the nature of social movements has changed from the 'old kind' and the 'new kind'. The old social movements that arose during the 1960s were concerned with workers' economic rights, labour conditions, class differences and power within the nation-states. The new ones from the 1980s, by contrast, focus on a wider field of social subjects, such as human rights, environmental issues, and values such as culture and identity. As the world has become more

international, the issues defy state-borders, and international corporations and intergovernmental organisations have more power in many regards than the nation-states, the social movements have correspondingly often become international too (Beyer 1994:206, della Porta and Diani 1999:11 f., Cohen and Rai 2000:4 ff.). The UN system from 1945 was founded on the sovereignty of nation-states, but as global corporations and global problems now are largely outside of the control of nation-states, the international arena has become the level to operate on in order to address social problems. The UN has been much criticised for the outdated model it is based upon⁴², but it is still the highest and most respected international organ there is, because of its charters of, and work for, peace and human rights. As much as the *International Monetary Fund*, the *World Trade Organization* and others of the UNs affiliated organs are attacked by several international social movements, it still is the main target for their addresses. If they only can be heard at the UN, changes can be made.

The difficulty in defining social movements lies in the high number existing, with a wide spectrum of types and goals amongst them. Within the plethora of existing social movements, James A. Beckford defines what characterises *religious* movements: “[A] religious movement⁴³ is a formal or informal mobilization of people, material resources, ideas and feelings in pursuit of objectives dictated by concerns deemed ultimately significant but largely outside the framework of conventional religious activities” (Beckford 2000:169). Interreligious⁴⁴ performative engagements can therefore, according to Beckford definition, be labeled ‘movement’, as they are aimed at concerns outside of the purely other-worldly or spiritual realm. Continuing, he also claims that “[A] strategy of religious movements aiming to transform the world is to claim that a highly significant turning point has been reached in the development of human knowledge and that the capacity to make a breakthrough into a new era of worldwide peace and contentment is therefore at hand” (Beckford 2000:174 f.). This trait is also striking as much of the interreligious engagement is founded on the perception of the world being in a situation of “fundamental crisis” (DTGE:4). Beckford’s hypothesis “is that as the power of formal religious organizations has declined, religious issues have not necessarily withered away or simply been privatized but have drifted away from their points of anchorage and become ‘cultural resources’. As such, religio[n] [...] [is]

⁴² Especially concerning the functioning of the Security Council and the General Assembly.

⁴³ Although he uses the term ‘movement’, the article is included in a book about ‘social movements’, and it is therefore likely that he talks about *social* movements here.

⁴⁴ I will continue to talk about ‘interreligious’ movements, not ‘religious’ movements, as Beckford only treats movements connected to one or another religion in his article. The interreligious movement is ‘religious’ in the sense that all religions are religious *per se*, but ‘interreligious’ in the sense that it involves more than one religion.

more freely available for deployment in attempts to mobilize public opinion and support against all manner of grievances” (Beckford 2000:178). The Parliament in 1993 was clear in how religion should be used as a resource in practical ways to transform the world in a positive manner, and according to these characteristics presented so far, the interreligious activities can thus be looked at as forming a (social) movement.

The traits Donatella della Porta and Mario Diani identify as characteristics for social movements are that *they form informal interaction networks, the participants share beliefs and solidarity*, and they *use protest* (della Porta and Diani 1999:14 f.). This last trait is problematic when talking about the interreligious movement for two reasons. First of all, in the case of the interreligious movements the characterisation of ‘protest’ can be distinguished as the clear anti-secular agenda towards the other subsystems. But not all those who engage in interreligious activities are concerned with the anti-secular agenda. The participants in local neighbourhood projects that result in a harmonious multireligious environment may consider the engagements in the local communities enough in themselves. The participants do not necessarily share a desire to transform the secular structures, so the assumption that the whole interreligious movement is solely based on the anti-secular agenda of obtaining more religious influence in the secular international society, seems too suspicious and critical. One should not forget that the performative engagement in the movement is based on a genuine belief that religion can contribute to a positive change in the world. David Venter and Ignatius Swart distinguish different levels in the social movements in order to clarify these two goals. They see the change from a focus on local community projects to a focus on changing in the overarching systems as a leap from one generation of movements to the next (Venter and Swart 2003:381). If one applies this model to the interreligious movement connected to the 1993 Parliament, the first generation corresponds with the broad ‘grassroots’ engagement in creating a peaceful multireligious environment, and the second with the systemic anti-secular goals promoted by the ‘elites’. The latter anti-secular level is founded on the first, as the number of the ‘grassroot’ participants and activities form an authoritative weight behind the anti-secular agencies. The anti-secular advocates have a systemic protest as part of their engagement, which the members of the general interreligious engagements may lack. I will therefore call the broad network of interreligious activities an ‘interreligious movement’, while a smaller part of this, which operates at the systemic level, will be called an ‘interreligious *social* movement’. The interreligious movement’s focus is religious

pluralism⁴⁵, while the interreligious social movement's focus is anti-secularity. The connection between the two is very close, as some of the core organisations upon which the social movement is based operate on both the interreligious and the systemic level.

Second, even though there is an element of anti-secular protest in the interreligious social movement, reaching its goal of getting acceptance and recognition from the other subsystems involves playing by their rules. The protest connected to social movements is often marked by violent or non-acceptable actions. The global society endorses certain values, such as personal freedom, respect for life, tolerance, human rights and universality, and by resorting to drastic ways of protesting, religion could be seen as a threat. As the DTGE states, religions can be used in ways which society rejects, which in other words would be considered *antisystemic*⁴⁶. By turning to violent actions, religious adherents would undermine the very cause they were trying to promote. The challenge for the religious subsystem would thus be to support anti-secularism, but at the same time convey that religion is not a threat. Only by projecting an image of religion as unified, peaceful and indispensable can the subsystem reach beyond the marginal position it has in the secular society. Therefore, the violent and terrifying religious actions carried out by fundamentalists in political conflicts, as exemplified in section 4.1, do not support the peaceful image of religion that the interreligious social movement prefers to promote. The fundamentalist actions highlighted by the media are, then, working against the interreligious social movement and its agenda at the systemic level.

Another trait characterising social movements is that they are instable and fragile, and that they have to institutionalise in order to endure (Beyer 1994:106, della Porta and Diani 1999:17). The promoters of performative anti-secularism would therefore have to transform the network into a structure more like those of which the other subsystems consist. The first step in this regard was to establish a common statement, the DTGE, and the second would be to make the other subsystems more aware of religion's relevance.

The difficulty religion faces as a subsystem at the systemic level is that there is a myriad of religious leaders, institutions and organisations. In order to approach the other subsystems, there would have to be some unities which could represent the spectrum of religious voices. Between 1993 and 1999, progress was made regarding the cooperation between several of the interreligious organisations.

⁴⁵ Here I mean 'pluralism' in the sense that the focus is to obtain peaceful co-existence in a religiously pluralistic society. When talking about the movement I do not mean 'pluralism' as opposed to 'exclusivism', 'inclusivism' and 'accepters' in the model under paragraph 1.3.

⁴⁶ *Antisystemic* rejects both the structure and the values of the global system. *Prosystemic* favours both the structure and the values of the global system (Beyer 1994:101).

4.2.2 The growing influence on the UN system and the formation of a network

During the years 1993-1999, several of the international interreligious organisations started to cooperate more closely on several projects in a loose network. This interreligious social movement also seemed to obtain a level of recognition from the secular subsystems, and the interreligious message was heard outside the religious communities.

In 1993 the *International Interfaith Centre* (IIC) in Oxford was established as a direct response to the *Year of interreligious understanding and cooperation*. Its role was to coordinate and help promote the existing interreligious activities around the world. The *Trust* of the IIC was established by the IARF and the WCF (internet15), and other interreligious organisations, like the CPWR and the ToU were the centre's international consultants (internet16). In other words, the agencies which earlier had cooperated on the IIOC now became partners in the IIC.

Another new initiative during this period was founding of the *United Religions Initiative* (URI) in 1995, an organisation in which the *Interfaith Youth Core* (IFYC) was developed in 1998. The IFYC was sponsored by the CPWR, the URI and the *Interfaith Center of New York*, and by 1999 it ran several programs in Chicago (internet17).

In 1995 the WCRP was given General Consultative Status in the ECOSOC, and Full Consultative Status in the UNESCO, the highest status achievable for a non-governmental organisation (NGO) (internet18). ToU also obtained Consultative Status in the ECOSOC (internet19).

In 1993 UNESCO brought fifty religious representatives together in Barcelona to talk about religion and peace, and a second conference called *Contribution by Religions to the Culture of Peace* was held in 1994. It was attended by 57 representatives of the main world religions, but this time they were also joined by experts in human sciences and peace research. The conference resulted in the *Declaration on the Role of Religion in the Promotion of a Culture of Peace* (internet20). At the same conference, Lama Gangchen proposed the formation of a *United Nations Spiritual Forum for World Peace*, which "looks for the creation of a permanent democratic space at global public level, where all those religious institutions and spiritual movements, which are willing to join forces with the UN in the task of building peace, can meet and find out useful ways of co-operation" (internet21). The year after, at the *Latin American Headquarters of the United Nations Economic Commission* in Chile, Gangchen repeated his proposition. Afterwards, the proposal was offered to several interreligious organisation and institutions, among others the WCRP, the URI, the CPWR and the ToU (internet22). The founding of such a body, working as a religious organ on the

systemic level, could then be the representative which secular agencies could approach in dialogues and cooperations.

The concept of a 'Global Ethic' also spread beyond the religious realm. The UN's Secretary-General Kofi Annan referred to the Global Ethic in his speeches in 1999 (internet23), and religion's important role in peace processes was also affirmed in *InterAction Council's* reports from 1996-1999. The title of the 1996 report was even *In Search of Global Ethical Standards* (internet24), and the reports for the three following years all stated the importance of religion (internet25, internet26).

These examples show how the interreligious agencies actively worked to gain influence on the systemic level, especially when it came to the international secular agencies in the UN system. Even though the organisations and individuals listed here are mostly of Western origin, they influenced international institutions. These collective actions, motivated by the same values and working towards the same goal, show the existence of the international interreligious social movement. Given such an anti-secular agenda, it is clear that the image portrayed of religion as unified by the interreligious discourse of ethic serves the goal of gaining more influence in society. The acknowledgement of the intrareligious discords would not benefit the movement's cause as it would undermine religion's unity, and the violent events also would confirm religion's antisystemic nature.

As part of the interreligious social movement itself, these signals may have been strong motivators behind why the CPWR decided that the next Parliament would focus more on the systemic relationship between religion and the secular subsystems. Despite the imbalance of representation in the 1993 event, the Parliament gave the impression of more or less representing religion *en masse*, and the next step would hence be to obtain a stronger position in society. This development follows the strategy of first uniting, then protesting, which one also could trace in the anti-secular strategy of the interreligious social movement.

4.3 The next step for the CPWR

After the Parliament in 1993 the CPWR evaluated what had happened and what to do further. Would there be a new Parliament, and what would then be the next step? In 1993 there were several interreligious organisations already in existence, and at the end of the Parliament the CPWR held a reception for the executive directors of those agencies who had participated. They were asked what they thought about the Parliament, and the response was they really did not see any reason why the CPWR should continue, as the other agencies already covered

what was seen at as the necessary arenas. The resources and money for interreligious activities were limited, so they did not need yet another agency to share with (Spector, Barcelona 2004). Still, the CPWR invited a number of the most important participants from the Parliament, and in 1994 it was decided that CPWR should continue to exist. They drafted an *International Initiative* where certain approaches and strategies were laid out for the future, both in terms of the international events, local projects and the financial structure. The plan was that the CPWR would focus on three areas: to plan another Parliament, to continue to develop and transmit the spirit of the DTGE, and to work on projects towards the commemoration of the year 2000 (Kenney 1996:138 ff.). These projects operated both on the ‘first-generation’ broad interreligious level and on the ‘second-generation’ anti-secular systemic level.

One positive and rather unexpected result of the Parliament was the impact it had on the local neighbourhood in Chicago. The event had been a collaboration between the religious communities in the city, and it had been a chance for them to come together and get to know each other. After the Parliament they continued to engage in dialogues and cooperate, and there were many positive interreligious results in the neighbourhood communities of Chicago. It was a direct outcome of the organisational work of the Parliament, and the CPWR wanted this to become one of the Parliament’s legacies in the future: improved interaction in the local interreligious community as a result of the event (Spector, Barcelona 2004). In 1996 the project *Creating Community Vision* was started to improve the relationships between the religious communities in Rogers Park, Chicago. More than 20 faith-communities became involved in the project, and formed the group *Rogers Park Interreligious Partners* (internet²⁷). The focus would in other words be not only on the religious leaders, but on the communities, the grassroot-level.

The more cooperative line with other interreligious organisations was a part of the CPWR’s future plans in order to continue the promotion of the DTGE. By establishing relationships to other interreligious groups, for example through the IIC, they could discuss the common principles and plan what the next Parliament should be about (Kenney 1996:140).

At the Parliament in 1993 the anti-secular level had been evident at the Assembly, which first and foremost had focused on the participation of the religious leaders. In a survey afterwards they were now asked what they envisioned the next step to be. The answer they received was that they should now turn towards the “other Guiding Institutions”, and ask them to take part in the four ethical precepts expressed in the DTGE. Here one can quite clearly see

the change in focus from the interreligious to the systemic, from the idea of uniting the religions to using that unity in approaching the secular level. But even if the next step was based on the idea of the Global Ethic, the survey was also used as an opportunity to criticise the DTGE. The CPWR was sensitive to this criticism, so even if the way onwards was based upon the Global Ethic, the concept was not as vital in 1999 as it had been in 1993 (Spector, Barcelona 2004).

Summary

During the years between 1993 and 1999 the distance between the religious poles of the exclusivistic fundamentalists and the interreligious movement became evident. The violent religiously inspired acts caught all the attention in the media, while at the same time the interreligious social movement went on in its pursuit of gaining more influence on the systemic level, by accentuating the discourse of unity in religious ethics. Many of the international interreligious organisations became more involved in common projects, and several initiatives were taken towards the UN and other secular institutions. The CPWR was part of this network, which also would influence the organisationing of the next Parliament.

CHAPTER 5: THE PARLIAMENT IN 1999

Secularism must be recognized for what it is: the religion of scientism born in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Gregorios 1996:229).

Introduction

In this chapter I will show how the Parliament in 1999 continued several themes and characteristics that were evident in 1993. Perhaps the most important was the essentialistic and performative rhetoric used in the Parliament in 1993, observable in the structure and frame of the program of both the Parliaments, as well as in the document *A Call to Our Guiding Institutions*. As a common interreligious conviction the Global Ethic in 1993 formed the basis for a religious subsystem. The next step in the anti-secular agenda was now to address the secular subsystems and challenge them to take religion seriously. The goal in the anti-secular agenda seemed to be a recognition and acknowledgment of religion as an important player in the international, global arena. However, despite the intrareligious

differences between exclusivists and universalists shown during the previous years, this Parliament's agenda also largely ignored intrareligious differences.

5.1 Cape Town

The Parliament in Cape Town in 1999 was just as big an event as the one in 1993. It was organised by an *International Interreligious Planning Committee*, representatives from the CPWR in Chicago, and the *African Advisory Committee*. The activities during the event were spread over several venues in the city, and the Parliament took place from 1-8 December. According to the Summary Report, more than 7000 people from more than 75 countries participated (Summary Report 1999⁴⁷:4). Many of the elements in the program for the Parliament in Chicago 1993 were clearly continued: the focus on the existing diversity in religions, mutual respect, the processes of learning others, shared concern over the world situation, interreligious cooperation in performative engagements, the appeared unity on a basis of the Global Ethic, and the appeals towards other global subsystems. Two features emphasised in the program made these traits obvious: the key-words 'identity', 'dialogue' and 'critical issues', and the image of South Africa as a microcosm.

5.1.1 Identity, dialogue and critical issues

At the Parliament in 1993, 639 sessions were on the program as 'Major Presentations' or 'Seminars and Lectures'⁴⁸. In 1999 the number was 824⁴⁹, divided into three different categories: 'Identity', 'Dialogue', and 'Critical Issues' (Program book 1999:7). The three key-words show how the event can be seen as a process towards interreligious performance. First of all, it is important to know one's own identity and tradition in order to be able to present oneself to others. Second, it is important to engage in dialogues with the 'religious other' in order to establish mutual respect and friendship. Third, and most importantly, the interreligious relationship can best be used when it is engaged in the world's critical issues. Taking the performative-based agenda at the Parliament into consideration as well, it is quite obvious that 'Identity' and 'Dialogue' are the foundation stones that have to be in place in order to reach the goal of engaged interreligious cooperation. This is also explained in the Program book:

⁴⁷ Found on internet²⁸.

⁴⁸ More than 800 if also counting the symposia, performances, morning meditations, exhibitions etc.

⁴⁹ In addition there were 74 performances and 78 film and video presentations (Program book 1999:34-49). See *Appendix: 3*.

It is not the intention of those who have gathered in Cape Town to create a new religion, or to diminish in any way the precious uniqueness of any path. Instead, we have come here to demonstrate that the religious and spiritual traditions and communities of Cape Town, of South Africa, and of the larger world can and should encounter one another in a spirit of respect, and with an openness to new understanding. We have joined with one another in a spirit of dialogue and cooperation, seeking to discover new ways to rise to the challenges and the opportunities of life at the threshold of a new century (Program book 1999:3).

This demonstrates how the nonnegotiables are respected, but how dialogues link people of all faiths together through a common ethic, in order to thereafter cooperate interreligiously. The anti-secular agenda is not so prominent in this structure. Rather, the possibility of co-existing peacefully together in a religiously pluralistic society is the main focus here. The same underlying message of ‘No world peace without dialogue between the religions’ was continued.

Despite the Parliament’s performative emphasis on the ‘Critical Issues’, the number of sessions under the category ‘Identity’ was over 400. ‘Dialogue’ consisted of 200, and ‘Critical issues’ 220. A clear pattern in the three categories can be seen in the percentage of how many sessions were functional in nature, and how many were performative. Taking account of only the Seminars and Lectures (not the Major Presentations), the average of functional sessions was 74% under ‘Identity’, 42% under ‘Dialogue’ and only 6% under ‘Critical Issues’. Put differently, few performative sessions were present in the largest of the categories (Program book 1999:54-204). In total, 456 sessions were performative, and 368 were functional. Just as in 1993, the performative outnumbered the functional, but not greatly⁵⁰. To simplify it a bit, one can say that while the CPWR seemed to try to guide the focus towards the performative engagement in ‘Critical Issues’, the presenters were more interested in talking about functional ‘Identity’.

What is interesting to note is that the ‘Dialogue’ category was supposed to contain “programs dealing with intrareligious and interreligious dialogue as well as with the encounter between religion and other institutions and disciplines” (Program book 1999:7). Here one has a category which deals with relationships on both the intrareligious, interreligious and systemic level. But there is a striking absence of sessions dealing directly with intrareligious issues, as defined earlier⁵¹. As a matter of fact, only four sessions can be

⁵⁰ See *Appendix: 3* for statistics.

⁵¹ See paragraph 1.4.

identified as such in the whole program⁵². But although the intrareligious differences seemed to be a non-topic at the Parliament, it was quite visible just outside the event, as it also had been in 1993. During the Opening Day over 10 000 marchers went from downtown Cape Town to District 6 in an interreligious procession, but were met by Christian and Muslim conservatives who protested against the interreligious dialogues taking place at the Parliament. The irony of this is that by the end of the procession the conservatives had their own interreligious dialogues (Benson, Barcelona 2004, Summary Report 1999:2). This was a clear sign of the differences, not between those of different religions who marched (or protested) together, but between those of the same religion who either went in the procession or protested against it. In other words, there was a joint interreligious exclusivistic front against the interreligious inclusivists, pluralists and accepters. What the exclusivists have in common is that they all share an absolute belief in the uncompromising nature of their nonnegotiables, and that the truth within the principles can not be relativised as ‘one truth among many’.

When it came to numbers of sessions according to religions, some of the 1993 trends continued. The Christians held most sessions (169), but at second place this time came the Muslims, with 78 sessions. Next came Hinduism with 72 sessions, and the others followed in much the same way as in Chicago. The only clearly visible difference was that the number of sessions concerning African Religion had risen from one to fifteen. And again, there was a large number of undefineable sessions connected to the New Age movement⁵³.

The Parliament in Chicago was criticised by many for first and foremost being a representation of Western adherents (Thelle 1994:46), but the official numbers after the 1999 Parliament indicated that a large percentage also came from non-Western cultures: “The country with the largest number of registrants was South Africa, followed in order by United States, Taiwan, Japan, India, United Kingdom, Canada, Korea, Singapore, France, Germany, Australia, Bangladesh, Hong Kong and Indonesia” (Summary Report 1999:4). Of the 7000 total registrants, half were South African (Request for proposals 2001:65). An obvious assumption is that the geographical background of the presenters to a large degree would reflect the society and country in which the Parliament event was hosted. But the backgrounds of the presenters had not in fact changed much since 1993. Looking at an extract of the

⁵² Two of them can be found in the ‘Identity’-category, and the two others in the ‘Dialogue’-category: *Meditation and Yoga as Christian Spiritual Practice, A Baptist vision for religious freedom, Intra-Jewish Dialogue – Is it Possible?, Islam, Muslims, and Religious Pluralism* (Program book 1999:104, 116, 153, 155).

⁵³ See Appendix: 3.

presentations, 125 of 353 presenters were ‘Western’⁵⁴. Again, the next group with the most presenters (78 of 353) had non-Western names, but were connected to the West in some way⁵⁵, many being professors at Western universities, especially in the USA. Even though the largest number of registered participants was from South Africa, there were not that many presenters with an African name (19). On the other hand, the presenters with Western names but further information connecting them to Africa exceeded them in number (42)⁵⁶. But also at this Parliament, the number of Indian presenters was quite high (39).

Another similarity between the Parliament in 1993 and the one in 1999 was that the performative aspect was more obvious in the structure of the event and the program than in the sessions proposed and presented by the participants.

5.1.2 South Africa

The CPWR had in the years after 1993 received applications from several cities around the world to host the next Parliament. The choice finally fell on Cape Town, and the South African frame gave this Parliament a slightly different character than the one in Chicago. What was so special about South Africa was its history of *apartheid* and *pluralism*. As a country which only recently had abandoned its centuries-old laws of segregation between the races after a struggle for equality in which members of all religions had taken part, it symbolised the strength of interreligious cooperations in social affairs. At the same time, the CPWR also saw how the organising of the Parliament could have positive spin-off effects in the city. As the Parliament in 1993 had resulted in a number of positive effects in the Chicago community, it was important for the CPWR that the next Parliaments could also spur local interreligious practical cooperation. As they met the bishop there during one of their first visits, they were told how the religious leaders from the various communities had used to meet regularly to plan how to fight apartheid. There had been interreligious collaborations and interactions to fight one common enemy. After apartheid was dismantled they had never met again, but started to pay attention to interreligious differences instead (Benson, Barcelona 2004). By making Cape Town the host-city, the CPWR hoped interreligious interactions once again could blossom.

The way in which South Africa was meant to stand as a metaphor for the Parliament-agenda can be seen in how it is described in the Program book:

⁵⁴ See *Appendix: 4*.

⁵⁵ The ‘Mixed’-category. See *Appendix: Method of analysis*.

⁵⁶ I have called this category ‘Mixed 2’. See *Appendix: Method of analysis*.

South Africa is a microcosm of the world. Living together are major communities of black and white people experiencing affluence or poverty, western development or third world need of it, forces of oppression and of liberation, and most of the world's major religions. During thirty years a revolution has occurred in which the people have liberated themselves from political oppression, and now seek to transform society (Program book 1999:28).

Apartheid became a metaphor for all the problems facing the world, and the way in which it had been fought also became a symbol of how a 'common enemy' could be handled, by joining the 'religious other': "South Africa has a unique history of interreligious solidarity in the struggle against the crime against humanity called Apartheid. The Parliament [...] provides us with a wonderful platform for enhancing the process of interreligious solidarity for the demanding tasks of reconciliation, reconstruction and the renaissance of our continent and the world", "At a minimum [...], we need tolerance [...]. But as the primary basis for human relations, it doesn't cut it. For one thing, [...] it does nothing to humanize the "other". It allows us to continue to divide the world up into "us" and "them" [...]. We have the opportunity to move beyond tolerance to a new sense of what we mean when we say "we"" (Program book 1999:2 f.). As in 1993 then, the agenda was one of including the whole human kind into a big 'us', despite differences in religious convictions. This attitude of openness in the event would draw more participants of the universalistic branches than the exclusivistic. But what also is noticeable is the way in which apartheid is first linked with the 'guiding institutions', or subsystems, as a residual problem⁵⁷ which only was solved when they cooperated with religion. In other words, what we detect here is again the anti-secular agenda on the systemic level: "Apartheid oppression was rooted in the Guiding Institutions. [...] Oppression was inflicted by good people who sincerely believed the colonial tradition that white western supremacy was the instrument of world salvation. Beneath this doctrine was their determination to retain economic power (wealth) in their own hands. These attitudes still rule many Guiding Institutions in the world today", "Apartheid oppression was crushed by a long process in which liberated political and religious forces cooperated", "[T]he panelists will recount how political and religious forces combined in the struggle to end apartheid oppression, and explore how they both could contribute to building a transformed society". Further, as a microcosm for the world, parallels were drawn on how to solve world problems: "The South African struggle raised contentious issues which still confront religious activists concerned to transform the world", "The transition in South Africa has been seen internationally as a social and political miracle. Yet deep-seated problems, many with global

⁵⁷ In the same way as seen in DTGE. See paragraph 3.2.2.

parallels, affect the project of building a new democracy. This seminar explores issues confronting religion in this new situation” (Program book 1999:27 f.). One of the parallels taken up was the problems of HIV/AIDS. The event started at the Opening Day with a commemoration of the *International AIDS Day*, with the unveiling of the *International AIDS Quilt*.

The South African metaphor and the problem of AIDS demonstrated a part of the performative framework, but this was also detectable during five of the seven *Evening Plenary Sessions*. The titles are indications in themselves: *Pursuing Universal Human Rights*, *Building Bridges of Understanding and Cooperation*, *Working Together: Fostering Creative Engagement*, *Meeting Essential Needs*, and *Nurturing Transformative Community* (Program book 1999:8). In addition to the Major Presentations, Seminars and Lectures, nine Symposia were also on the program. All of them had either a clear profile of social concern or approach towards other subsystems. Some of them had both, for example *Interfaith in Action in a Global Context*, where several of the organisations in the interreligious social movement participated⁵⁸.

Yet another similarity with the Parliament in 1993 was that the Parliament in 1999 also contained a program that was closed to the wide spectrum of participants. Although the number and representatives participating at the Parliament Assembly in 1999 had been widened considerably, it was still a VIP-event where a document following the DTGE was drafted. The Parliament event as a whole was to a large degree focused on the peaceful co-existence of different religions, but the interreligious anti-secular agenda was more visible at the Assembly, where a step further was taken on the systemic level.

5.2 A Call to Our Guiding Institutions

5.2.1 The structure and anti-secularism in the Call

The document that followed the DTGE was titled *A Call to Our Guiding Institutions*⁵⁹ (referred to as the ‘Call’ hereafter). As the CPWR had received a lot of criticism for the way the DTGE had been presented in 1993, this document was introduced in a completely different manner (internet30). During the last three days of the Parliament, an Assembly was able to discuss and work on the Call. The Assembly consisted of some 450 people. 250 represented various religions, 25 youth came from the *Next Generation* group, and 100

⁵⁸ IARF, URI, WCF, WCRP, ToU, Global Ethic Foundation, IFYC, CPWR and IIC, among others.

⁵⁹ The document can be found on www.cpwr.org/resource/call.pdf (internet29).

representatives and observers came from the 'Guiding Institutions', the UN, the World Bank, NGOs, etc., (internet31 and internet32). The Assembly was divided into several small groups during the three days where they discussed various questions and suggestions, such as how the Call could best be implemented and what themes the parts of the document should consist (internet33 and internet32). The working groups were divided according to four categories: *Religious and spiritual perspectives on the Call*, *Engaging the Guiding Institutions*, *Addressing the critical issues*, and *Projects of hope and service* (Summary Report 1999:9).

In the Call it was even more obvious than in the DTGE that the religious ethic was used as a way of influencing the secular subsystems, and it is first and foremost part IV in the DTGE, which urges various professions to develop their own ethical guidelines, which is elaborated on here. The 50-page document⁶⁰ treats each 'guiding institution' separately. These sectors can to some extent be recognised as the different functional and secular subsystems. The document appeals to the subsystems to reflect upon their ethics and conducts "in the light of the principles of the *Global Ethic*". Further: "[t]he *Call* will make it clear that the principles and commitments of the *Global Ethic* relate directly and immediately to their functioning".

The document starts with a part called "From the *Global Ethic* to A *Call to Our Guiding Institutions*" with an 'Introduction'. Here, the performative aspect connected to the world-situation is repeated:

The perils and promises of this new reality bring to mind several ancient understandings; that human beings are interdependent and responsible for the care of the Earth; that we are each worthy of a meaningful life and obliged to help the human community toward a life of peace and dignity; that the choices shaping a just, peaceful, and sustainable future are choices we must make together (Call:1).

Then, the Call states quite explicitly how there has been a continuing process from 1893 until 1999:

The 1999 Parliament of the World's Religions and its keynote document, *A Call to Our Guiding Institutions*, continue a tradition born in Chicago in 1893. At the first Parliament [...] several hundred leaders, scholars, theologians, and other representatives of the world's religions came together to ponder the place of faith and spirituality in the modern world. [...] This tradition was reborn in 1993 [...]. Throughout the 1993 Parliament, participants were challenged to think critically and holistically about the role of religious and spiritual communities in their pursuit of creative solutions to the world's most pressing problems. [...] [It] offered a thoughtful and provocative statement of fundamental ethical principles shared by the world's religious and spiritual traditions. That statement took form in [...]

⁶⁰ The pages of reference given here follow the version found on internet29.

Towards a Global Ethic: An Initial Declaration [...]. On the occasion of the 1999 Parliament [...], the [CPWR] urges continuing reflection on the commitments at the heart of the *Global Ethic* and renewed efforts to apply them. Essential to such efforts is the acknowledgment that we live in a world in which powerful institutions exercise a significant and inescapable influence on our collective future. Woven through the core documents and practices of these institutions are values, perspectives, and assumptions that can be examined in the light of the principles of the *Global Ethic* (Call:2).

What this demonstrates is the way in which the CPWR deliberately pursues the socially concerned ethic from 1893 as a platform on which to unite all religions, and how an implicit criticism of the other subsystems' lack of ethic forms an argument for why religion is indispensable to them. At the same time, the interreligious social movement does not want to impose itself by force on the secular subsystems. That is why the Call takes shape as a friendly appeal and invitation:

A Call to Our Guiding Institutions is not a prescriptive or admonitory document. It is instead an appeal for active, ongoing dialogue about the creation of a just, peaceful, and sustainable future on behalf of the entire Earth community. For this reason, the *Call* consists of specific, particular invitations rather than sweeping declarations or hectoring injunctions (Call:3).

This can be interpreted as an attempt to be acknowledged and recognised by the other subsystems as a viable partner of dialogue. In the following 'Rationale', the document repeats the main points stated in the DTGE, and why the 'critical issues' demand the presence of religion:

Without spiritual grounding, visions of a far better world cannot be realized. [...] Clearly, the critical issues facing the world today present an acute ethical challenge to these institutions (Call:9).

Thereafter follows the main part. The document addresses the different 'guiding institutions' in separate sections where each section consists of three parts. Part A starts with "We envision a world in which", and then follow several points which would be evident in society if the 'guiding institution' had worked the way it *should*. Part B describes why the subsystem is important in the world, and how it ideally should function following the right ethic. Indirectly, this part is a criticism of the 'guiding institution', since the ideal stands in stark contrast to current practice. By emphasising how important ethic is for the 'guiding institution', the indirect argument is also made for why religion is so important. Part C starts with "We call on the institutions of the [name of the 'guiding institution'] to develop practical ways to engage

creatively with other guiding institutions in pursuit of a just, peaceful, and sustainable world. Then, part C ends with several suggestions to how the ‘guiding institution’ can change for the better. Here follow some examples:

- *The Call to Religion and Spirituality* (Call:17 ff.)

B: Among the noblest functions of religion is the promulgation of systems of beliefs, practices, and ethics that honor the humanity [...] and foster the vitality and moral well-being of the society.

C: Each is invited [...]

7. to safeguard against the use of religious and spiritual belief and practice as briefs of intolerance, tools for political manipulation, or warrants for conflict, terror, and violence;

- *The Call to Government* (Call:21 ff.)

B: Among the noblest functions of government is securing for its citizens their individual and collective well-being. [...] Today, our world is a field of competing nations. For the world to become a true community, we must work toward a profound affirmation of global interdependence [...]. The art of governing [...] can be understood in terms of the skillful application of ethical mandates and moral convictions to political realities.

- *The Call to Agriculture, Labor, Industry, and Commerce*⁶¹ (Call:25 ff.)

A: We envision a world in which [...] high moral standards and trustworthiness guide all interactions in the marketplace and the workplace;

B: What we human beings desire, however, often eclipses material interests.

C: Each is invited [...]

1. to develop and extend common statements of ethical standards and practices for production, exchange, lending, and employment that could be accepted, implemented, and monitored around the world;

- *The Call to Education* (Call:29 ff.)

A: We envision a world in which [...] ethical, moral, and spiritual questions are an integral part of academic and civil discourse;

C: Each is invited [...]

10. to acknowledge that moral and spiritual questions are as critical to academic as to civil discourse [...]

⁶¹ This ‘guiding institution’ can also be called ‘Business’ (Program book 1999:21).

- *The Call to Arts and Communications Media* (Call:33 ff.)

A: We envision a world in which [...] the sacred stories, symbols, and wisdom of the world's religious and spiritual traditions are broadly disseminated and cherished.

- *The Call to Science and Medicine* (Call:37 ff.)

B: Over the course of history, science and religion have often been seen as contradictory or even as mutually exclusive. Increasing openness, however, has recently produced a new level of dialogue between the two. This development could not be more fortuitous: in the final analysis, the wisdom of religion, the knowledge of science, and the art of medicine are indispensable to each other and to a sustainable future.

C: Each is invited [...]

1. to enter into dialogue with competent persons from the world's religious and spiritual traditions with regard to the ethical and moral dimensions of research programs, and the long-range consequences of scientific, medical, and technological innovation;

9. to enter into dialogue with religious and spiritual communities about the evolving scientific understanding of the origins and complex dynamics of the universe.

- *The Call to International Intergovernmental Organizations* (Call:41 ff.)

B: The twentieth century has been punctuated by two world wars and plagued by regional and world conflicts. [...] Yet we have also witnessed a series of strongly worded international affirmations – beginning with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 – that served as the basis for countless economic, social, and political movements and reforms. [...] [This has] given rise to an array of international intergovernmental organizations. These include the United Nations, the European Union, the Pacific Community, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the Organization of African Unity, the Organization of American States, the International Court of Justice, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization, the International Labor Organization, the World Health Organization, and many others.

C: We call on international intergovernmental organizations to develop practical ways to engage creatively with other guiding institutions in pursuit of a just, peaceful, and sustainable world.

- *The Call to Organizations of Civil Society* (Call:45 ff.)

B: Among the noblest functions of civil society is mediation between the power of the state and the rights, needs, and responsibilities of individuals and groups.

What these examples show is how the rhetoric implies that the secular subsystems' lack of ethic to a large degree has led to the problems evident in society, and that it is only by consulting religion that they can incorporate the needed ethic in order to become a well-functioning 'guiding institution'. The examples also show how the 'guiding institutions' are urged to establish cooperations with the religious subsystem. By using a rhetoric based on a performative concern over the world situation, the anti-secular power-agenda becomes legitimate. Religion's involvement in mundane affairs is also defended in the section concerning 'Religion and Spirituality': "When individuals and communities struggle with ethical questions, religion and spirituality provide necessary and trustworthy values, norms, motivations, and ideals, *all grounded in an ultimate reality* [emphasis added]. At the same time, ethical challenges demand that religious and spiritual people bring their most cherished principles to bear in the real world." Religion's 'interference' in the other subsystems' arenas is in other words defended in terms of the authority arising from its divine relationship to the transcendent 'ultimate reality'. In this way, the essentialistic and ethical discourse of religion becomes a way to promote the anti-secular agenda.

5.2.2 Gifts of Service to the World

The Call was built on the DTGE, and the unified religious voice presented in the first document turned towards the secular agencies in the second. By addressing each and every 'guiding institution' separately, the invitations to cooperate became very direct, and the arguments for why a particular 'guiding institution' should include religion as a partner were specific for that particular sector. The intent of the Call was to motivate the secular subsystems into actions that could bring about positive change in society:

In inviting them to examine their roles for a new century, the *Call* will make it clear that the principles and commitments of the *Global Ethic* relate directly and immediately to their functioning. It will also propose a process of creative engagement that will involve not only the religions of the world but all other guiding institutions as well. The Council's hope is that the *Call* will also provide encouragement and direction for those wishing to offer gifts of service to the world (Call:3).

The *Gifts of Service to the World* was another project the CPWR had worked on during the two years before 1999. The CPWR had collected initiatives by communities and groups

which were meant to “relieve suffering, promote harmony, and build a better world” (Summary Report 1999:11). When the participants in Cape Town registered they were given a copy of the book *Gifts of Service to the World* where they could find a description of over 300 projects offered in order to improve the world’s problems. During the Parliament participants could also offer their own ‘gifts’ by describing how the participants themselves would engage in initiatives supporting the Call (Summary Report 1999:11). By addressing the ‘Guiding Institutions’, the goal was to make the secular agencies take the initiative with respect to their own ‘gifts’, and perhaps particularly ‘gifts’ that included cooperations with religion. The result of the Assembly was around 200 commitments which were presented by the religious leaders and the leaders of the Guiding Institutions (Spector, Barcelona 2004).

Summary

During the 1999 Parliament, representatives from various religions tried to engage the secular ‘guiding institutions’ in cooperation and socially concerned initiatives. This can possibly be understood as not only an expectation of actually obtaining results, but equally as a desire to be recognised as an equal partner. The Call built on the DTGE’s ethical discourse and brought the interreligious dialogue up to the systemic level, by presenting religion as a united subsystem capable of cooperating with the secular agencies.

As in 1893 and 1993 the Western dominance was still clear among the presenters, and despite the intrareligious differences clearly visible in general society, the subject was more or less absent in the program. The universalistic atmosphere of the Parliament did probably much to make the exclusivists abstain from participating, which made it difficult to obtain actual dialogues between pluralists, inclusivists, accepters and exclusivists.

CHAPTER 6: BETWEEN 1999 AND 2004

Many of you know that 9/11 did something to the popular consciousness, and also the policy-makers' consciousness. Two things came out very clearly after 9/11. One: Religion is definitely *the* problem. Two: Religion has to be the next issue around which the international development effort needs to be geared. [...] One of the interesting things is that if you look at the international developing community in general, the 70s and 80s seemed to focus on economical and social development issues more broadly. And then in the 90s we suddenly heard key-words like the human rights, democracy, self-governments. After 9/11: *Religion*. Religion has become the next interesting or sexy word that the international [...] community is going to address (Karam, Barcelona 2004).

Introduction

In this part I will present the events taking place between 1999 and 2004 which marked the religious landscape and people's perceptions of religion; first what took place in the interreligious social movement and then outside it. I believe this period in particular strongly demonstrated the need for intrareligious dialogues, and the issue became harder to overlook for the interreligious social movement afterwards.

6.1 The Network of International Interfaith Organisations

6.1.1 The NIIO

In March 2001, the IIC in Oxford gathered 14 international interreligious organisations in what was to be called the *Network of International Interfaith Organisations* (NIIO). In addition to the afore mentioned IIC, IARF, WCF, CPWR, WCRP, ToU, URI and the IFYC, the network now expanded with the *Minorities of Europe*, *Peace Council*, *World Faiths Development Dialogue* and *World Fellowship of Inter-Religious Councils*. While some of these 12 organisations supported an anti-secular agenda (ToU had started as an idea to form a spiritual UN, WCRP was involved in government and UN affairs, and CPWR had reached out to the secular subsystems with the Call), most of them concentrated on interreligious relations. Systemic relations and the anti-secular agenda was clearest in the following last two members.

Lama Gangchen's idea from 1993 had developed into the *Project towards a Spiritual Forum for World Peace at the United Nations* (SFUN). The SFUN did not, in 2001, have any

concrete results. It was not until a gathering in Geneva in May 2004 that a *Partnership Committee* was established, and the first draft for the proposal was prepared (Gonzales, Barcelona 2004).

In August 2000, 1200⁶² of the world's religious and spiritual leaders met at the UN at a gathering called the *Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders*. The outcome of the event was a signing of the declaration called *Commitment to Global Peace*, which promulgates the same interreligious performative social concerns as the DTGE. Another outcome was the decision to establish an organ called the *World Council of Religious and Spiritual Leaders* (WCRL). The goal for this council was to serve as a resource for the "UN and its agencies, nation states and other international organizations, offering the collective wisdom and resources of faith traditions toward the resolution of global problems" (internet35). In addition, links were established to both the UN's *High Commission for Human Rights* and to UNESCO (internet34). The gathering and its results show how religion now had achieved a recognition within the secular UN-system, and in 2001, then, the WCRL became a member of the network of the interreligious social movement.

This network can be identified as an interreligious social movement, even though not all the members were involved in anti-secular activities, but were rather supporting a peaceful pluralistic interreligious society. This is because one can assume that the partners in such a network probably would largely support the ideas and goals of the others. As all of them clearly were part of the interreligious movement, some of them in particular were anti-secularly aimed. As the other organisation most likely have not opposed those agendas, one can therefore suggest that the whole NIIO was supportive of anti-secularity. The general pluralistic level and the anti-secular level are not clearly separated, so one can therefore identify the NIIO to be an interreligious *social* movement⁶³.

The goal of NIIO was to enhance cooperation and dialogue amongst the various interreligious organisations. Even though the goals and projects of the organisations spanned a number of themes and target-groups, they all promoted a strong spirit of interreligious performance. None of them mention intrareligious relations in the presentation of NIIO (internet21 and internet35). It seems as if the different interreligious organisations now were more focused on a cooperation where each had their specific niche. After the 1993 Parliament, in contrast, it had seemed as if there was more of a spirit of competition between

⁶² 1200 according to internet21, 2000 according to internet34.

⁶³ For an explanation of how I use the two concepts 'interreligious movement' and 'interreligious social movement', see paragraph 4.2.1.

them, even though at that point the number of international interreligious organisations was lower. After the first meeting in 2001, the parties in the NIIO have met every year, and in 2004 they would come to meet in Barcelona at the Parliament event there.

6.1.2 The CPWR's change of strategy

After the Parliament in 1999 in Cape Town, the CPWR again went through a process of evaluation, and this time the proposed changes were put down in the document *Strategic Plan for 2001-2005*. What had turned out to be a successful byproduct of the organisationing of the Parliament in 1993, the strengthened local interreligious community, had been an important goal in 1999. The focus on the local communities became CPWR's niche, in addition to the Parliament events (Spector and Ficca, Barcelona 2004). The Strategic Plan lists five focus areas for the CPWR (Strategic Plan 2001:8-12):

- 1) The Parliament events, which should serve as a 'world forum' "for diverse and engaged individuals, communities and institutions to encounter one another, reflect together on the critical issues facing the human community, and return to their homes inspired to be agents of hope and change for a better future".
- 2) The global dimension, which aims at promoting relationships and dialogues on the interreligious and systemic levels, and inspire groups and communities to make their 'Gifts of Services'. Through interreligious collaboration there is also a hope to "find new ways to contribute to the world's religious and spiritual communities and to the *interreligious movement* [emphasis added] worldwide".
- 3) The metropolitan Chicago dimension, where the interreligious ties and activities in the community of Chicago should be further strengthened and expanded.
- 4) The multiple-local dimension, where a network of projects enhance interreligious relations in various local communities. This network was named *Partner Cities*.
- 5) Organisational capacity, which serves the strengthening of the CPWR as an organisation.

There are also three stated principles the CPWR should follow in the Strategic Plan (Strategic Plan 2001:13-15):

1. Harmony, not unity. "Key to the conceptual framework of the Parliament is the understanding that unity among religions cannot be attained. [...] Interreligious harmony, on the other hand, is an attainable and highly desirable goal. [...] [W]ithin each tradition are the resources [...] that enable them to enter into respectful,

appreciative and cooperative relationships with persons and communities of other traditions.”

2. Convergence, not consensus. “Consensus between religious and spiritual communities on matters of beliefs, practices and engagement with the world cannot be attained. There are, however, significant areas in which key convictions, commitments, aims and purposes of various groupings of communities converge. They are *respect for religious and spiritual identity; *awareness and appreciation of religious and spiritual diversity; *interreligious dialogue for the purpose of mutual understanding and personal growth; *collaborative service – rooted in faith and spirituality – in response to pressing human needs; *community-capacity building through advocacy, community development and public policy; *conflict resolution between religious and spiritual communities and other types of communities, especially when rooted in racism and religious intolerance; and *bringing the voice of religion and spirituality to bear on matters of ethical, moral, social and civic concern.”
3. Facilitation, not legislation or membership-organisation. This principle focuses on facilitating the help needed in each specific community case, without forcing structures or models upon the community which would be inappropriate for it.

What we can see in these points is a clear recognition that each religious tradition is unique and must be respected, and that there is no attempt to unify them into one joint religion. But at the same time, the CPWR emphasises the ethic and values which are found in all religions, and which form the Global Ethic. In this sense, there *is* a unity, although there is a strong emphasis on the diversity within the unity. There is a relativism on the functional level of the nonnegotiables, but an absoluteness on the performative level of ethic. Perhaps this was a reason why the the topic of intrareligious dialogues now emerged. It was during the time around 2001 that the CPWR also started to plan the next Parliament event, planned for 2005 (Request for Proposals, 2001). The agenda and focus of the program was not yet planned, but the religious events occurring in the time that followed may also have shaped the opinion that it was time to shed some light on intrareligious differences.

6.2 The ambivalence of religion

6.2.1 9/11 and religious terrorism

The day of September 11th 2001 forced international society’s policies to focus on religion and terrorism. Four airplanes were hijacked by the fundamentalist Muslim network *al-Qaida*.

Two of them destroyed the twin towers of the World Trade Center, another one crashed into the Pentagon, and the fourth went down before it reached the probable goal of the White House. As much as the physical devastation and people killed as a result of external attacks was earlier unknown in the USA, it was the symbolic effect of these acts that shook the world. The targets hit represented the main principles of the American hegemony; its business, military and political power (Kepel 2002:1). The attacks became symbols of not only a hatred towards the USA, but the whole West. In the period following, when the world could follow the destruction and dramatic scenes via a variety of news-providers, the connection between religion and violence became obvious, and the new ‘buzzwords’ became ‘terrorism’, and especially ‘*religious* terrorism’.

There are a number of definitions for ‘terrorism’, and as Brenda and James Lutz remark, many of them serve political purposes in order to label opponents as terrorists. That is why they find the following definition value-free enough to be suitable in academic works (Lutz 2004:9 f.):

Terrorism involves political aims and motives. It is violent or threatens violence. It is designed to generate fear in a target audience that extends beyond the immediate victims of the violence. The violence is conducted by an identifiable organization. The violence involves a non-state actor or actors as either perpetrator, the victim of the violence, or both. Finally, the acts of violence are designed to create power in situations in which power previously had been lacking (i.e. the violence attempts to enhance the power base of the organization undertaking the actions).

In addition, Aref M. Al-Khattar specifies what marks *religious* terrorism (Al-Khattar 2003:96):

Religious terrorism is a violent act against others (individuals, groups, or states) to coerce them to behave or act according to the perpetrator’s (individual, group, or state) interpretation of a religion.

Oliver McTernan also states that characteristic of religious terrorists is their absolute belief in their own dogmas; a belief that “their scriptural or foundational texts were dictated verbatim by a divine authority and as such are beyond interpretation” (McTernan 2003:23). Mark Juergensmeyer is another author who draws up certain traits of what religious terrorism is all about. He states that those who resort to violence on the basis of religion have a perception of taking part in a cosmic war, where their side is an underdog. They themselves fight on the ‘good’ side, and with the help of God, they will eventually win the battle, although it may be after their own lifetimes. This means that they are willing sacrifice their lives for a ‘higher

good'. This attitude justifies the use of violence (Juergensmeyer 2000:145 ff.). But in order to fight a war, they must also have an enemy. Juergensmeyer argues that the terrorists satanise those who are identified as enemies, while they themselves become martyrs (Juergensmeyer 2000:164). In other words, religious terrorism is based upon a very static, essentialistic form of religious discourse which at the same time also is highly exclusivistic and fundamentalistic.

The characteristics of religious terrorism are easily observable in the network of al-Qaida, where Osama Bin Laden is a leader-figure⁶⁴. Although largely unknown to world-society in general before 9/11, Bin Laden had already in 1996 issued a fatwa called a *Declaration of Jihad against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places*, claiming that they were in a state of war. The text is filled with quotations from the Quran, *hadiths* and references (Kepel 2002:317). In 1998 he also stated in an interview in Afghanistan that “[i]t is far better for anyone to kill a single American soldier than to squander his efforts on other activities [...]. We believe that the worst thieves in the world today and the worst terrorists are the Americans. [...] We do not have to differentiate between military or civilians. As far as we are concerned, they are all targets” (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (NCTAUUS):47).

Bin Laden's rhetoric draws inspiration from the Egyptian writer Sayyid Qutb, which permits Muslims to take to violence and murder of the 'unbelievers' (NCTAUUS 2004:46, 51). What we see here is the satanisation of the 'others', and a definitive belief in their own truth-claims. Being a friend of the Palestinian university professor Abdallah Azzam, Bin Laden has also been inspired by his ideas of how the Muslim concept *jihad* makes violence against non-Muslims legitimate, in order to purify what is perceived as Muslim land (Kepel 2002:vi f., 144 ff). Together, they formed a “Bureau of Services”, which recruited Muslims to take part in driving the Soviets out of Afghanistan (NCTAUUS 2004:56). As they succeeded and the Taliban took over in 1992, the al-Qaida activists spread throughout the world, and the battle against non-Muslims extended beyond the holy Muslim places (Kepel 2002:299 ff.)⁶⁵. Especially the Americans became the target-enemy, which eventually resulted in the events of 9/11.

For many, this aggression between Muslims and the Western world seemed to confirm the theories already promoted by Huntington, that the world in fact moved towards a 'clash of civilizations', where religion was a prime divider (McTernan 2003:1, Lutz 2004:86 f.). But this picture of a united Islam behind al-Qaida's interpretation of the religion gives a distorted

⁶⁴ The way these Arab names are spelled vary in different sources.

⁶⁵ For a thorough presentation of Osama Bin Laden and al-Qaida, see Kepel 2003 and NCTAUUS 2004.

picture of reality. After 9/11, a number of Muslim clerics around the world distanced themselves from the attacks (Kepel 2002:ix), and Muslim communities strongly condemned the use of violence in the name of Islam. These reactions, more than anything, show what kind of intrareligious differences exist, and not only within Islam, although Islam has been the religion in which the difference have been clearest in recent years. Examples of how violence may be interpreted as legitimate are also found in Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism and Hinduism (McTernan 2003:45-76, Al-Khattar 2003:47-59).

According to McTernan, two kinds of reactions are common when people are faced with religious violence: “They either exaggerate religion’s role, denouncing it as the root cause of all conflict, or they deny that ‘real’ religion could be responsible in any way for indiscriminate violence”. The first reaction is a reaction which could be found by those advocating a secular society where religion is a private matter, which should not interfere on other areas. The argument of exterminating all religion in order to obtain a peaceful and ordered society was promoted more eagerly after 9/11 (McTernan 2003:20). This argument is what the interreligious social movement would fear the most in its anti-secular agenda, and the 9/11-events seemed to drag all forms of religion down in the eyes of the secular subsystems. It gave them a good example for why religion should ‘mind its own business’, gave strength to the arguments that religion is anti-systemic, and served as evidence to the Enlightenment assumption that religion and non-rational ideas could lead to nothing but violence and unwanted actions. The second reaction, of denouncing religious violence as ‘false’ religion, is the reaction of religious leaders, as they fear exactly this generalisation of all religion as something ‘bad’. But the denial of violence as something linked with religion is, according to McTernan, a problem in itself (McTernan 2003:21). Without acknowledging acts of violence as real interpretations of religions, and as evidences of the existing intrareligious differences, the problem of religious violence can not be addressed. That acknowledgement presupposes the recognition of religions as processual and changeable unities, a recognition which goes against the interreligious social movement’s attempt to portray religion to be one unity based upon a common ethic.

6.2.2 How religious problems demand religious solutions

According to Andreas Hasenclever and Volker Ritterberger, blaming solely religion for conflicts and violence is an argument made on wrong premises. They argue that other factors, such as power and material interests, to a large degree are the factors triggering conflicts, and that the religious justification for violent conflicts is a rhetorical rather than substantial

problem. But at the same time, religion may escalate or de-escalate the conflict already present (Hasenclever & Ritterberger 2003:114), and in the case of religious terrorism, religion has had an escalating effect.

So how should the problem of religious terrorism and fundamentalism be dealt with, both on a general humanitarian level and to prevent the interreligious, anti-secular social movement from losing the ground it has gained so far? Both Appleby, Al-Khattar and McTernan agree that the solution lies in intrareligious dialogues. Since religious arguments⁶⁶ and rhetoric lies behind the use of religious violence, religious arguments must also lie behind the denouncement of religious violence. The religious leaders who stand against religious aggression are keys in solving the problem of religiously motivated violence. While parties involved in interreligious dialogues have to use a ‘second-order religious language’⁶⁷, the parties involved in intrareligious dialogues must use a ‘first-order religious language’, which is a “discourse [...] that draws on the primary communal symbols, doctrines, religionational myths, and particularist historical understanding of the religious group” (Appleby 2000:280). What they call for is more responsibility from the religious leaders who believe that a use of their religions may lead to conflict-resolutions, tolerance and collaborations with the ‘religious other’. McTernan formulates it in the following way: “With a clear, unambiguous declaration of the true values of their traditions, the leaders of these hierarchical, clerical structures need urgently to develop a sense of co-responsibility for the actions of their co-religionists, and to challenge their communities that are caught up in communal strife or global terrorism” (Appleby 200:276-307, Al-Khattar 2003:99-101, McTernan 2003:161). The kind of intrareligious dialogues called for here is not primarily dialogues between, for example, Catholics, Protestants and Orthodox Christians which can be found in Christian ecumenism, but the dialogues between exclusivist and pluralist Christians.

But are religious leaders ready to recognise how their transcendent, authoritative nonnegotiables in fact are products of changing and interpretative processes? Are the inclusivist, pluralist and acceptant religious adherents willing to go into dialogues with the exclusivists and fundamentalists of the same religion, and vice-versa? If the interreligious social movement wants to represent religion as a whole *vis-à-vis* the secular subsystems, it has to take the *whole* religion into account, including religious fundamentalists and terrorists. That

⁶⁶ “[R]eligious arguments are those that draw on a community’s sacred texts, precepts, and ritual and ethical practices, interpreting their meanings and values with the intent of shaping the concrete choices and behavior of the members of the community” (Appleby 2000:282).

⁶⁷ See paragraph 3.2.2.

may be one of the reasons why the Parliament actually brought up the theme ‘Intrareligious’ at the program in 2004.

Summary

In this chapter I have shown how the interreligious social movement became an organised network in the NIIO, and how the members operated both on the interreligious and the systemic level. At the same time, the events connecting religion to violence continued after 1999 and escalated into the 9/11 attacks. As this both tainted the image the interreligious social movement had tried to promote of religion as a humanitarian resource, and demonstrated the differences within religions, it was hard to continue ignoring the need for intrareligious dialogues.

CHAPTER 7: THE PARLIAMENT IN 2004

Perhaps there are four billion worldviews, since every person has her or his set of values and perspectives on life (Smart 1993:1).

Introduction

In this chapter I will show how the socially engaged performative contributions of religion continued to be the main emphasis of the Parliament program in 2004, but that in this year the *intrareligious* focus was incorporated into the agenda. However, the response of the participants and presenters to the intrareligious level was rather modest. At the same time the anti-secular aspects were less visible in the 2004 Parliament as there was no separate program for the ‘elite’ in the same way as in the previous years, but rather a stronger emphasis on the interreligious movement in general. This did not mean that the anti-secular agenda was forgotten by the interreligious social movement. As a matter of fact, it seemed as if the anti-secular goal on the systemic level started to take shape into a very concrete project. As in 1993 and 1999, also this Parliament was dominated by universalist, Western participants.

7.1 Barcelona

During the days July 7 -13 the fourth Parliament took place in Barcelona, Spain, as an event during the five-month *Universal Forum of Cultures* in the city. This year there were about

9000 people who attended the Parliament (internet36). The Barcelona Parliament was organised one year earlier than the CPWR had originally planned, but due to the opportunity of having the gathering as part of the Universal Forum event, the CPWR decided to precipitate the Parliament.

The Parliament took place at the Forum area located at the seafront between Barcelona and Sant Adria de Besos, and one of the tones set at the Parliament was the remembering of the terrorist-attacks in Madrid on March 11th the same year, where 192 people were killed by bombs at train stations (Program book 2004:11). This tragic event seemed to bring back the memories of the 9/11-events, as both were examples of how religion can be used in terrorism and violence, and al-Qaeda groups also were responsible for the Madrid attacks. The Parliament's central theme was "Pathways to peace: the wisdom of listening, the power of commitment". The performative interreligious focus was again emphasised, and it was acknowledged that "[c]onflict, violence and injustice in the world today, often carried on in the name of religion, can leave us feeling helpless and discouraged. In this climate, we struggle to build a better world" (Program book 2004:23). As the intrareligious differences had become so clear and importunate it was therefore not very surprising that intrareligious relations were part of the Parliament agenda in 2004. The underlying message during the two first Parliaments had been: 'No world peace without dialogues between the religions'. Now, the 'dialogues *within* the religions' also became an issue.

Again, as with earlier Parliaments, this one was also attended first and foremost by liberal-minded people. The atmosphere of the event was infused by a spirit of celebration of pluralism and diversity. There were a handful of exclusivists who protested against the event outside the main entrance to the Parliament area, but they were hardly noticeable in the diverse crowd of participants. The feeling that I in fact was witness to a religious marketplace was particularly strong in the main building where a number of religious groups presented themselves at booths. As I walked past representatives, books, pictures, music and folders of different groups of Hinduism, Islam, Paganism, Buddhism and so on, I felt as if I was walking in the middle of a spiritual bazaar. Especially the Sikhs got a lot of attention this year, as they had several historical events to celebrate, and every day thousands of Parliament participants were served free vegetarian lunch by hundreds of Sikhs.

7.1.1 Intrareligious, interreligious and engagement

The number of sessions was much lower in 2004 than in the two preceding Parliaments. In addition to the 107 'Morning Observances' which started the program each day, the main

program of seminars, lectures and presentations consisted of only 352 sessions⁶⁸. The main program was, as in 1999, divided into three categories. This time they were called ‘Intrareligious programs’, ‘Interreligious programs’ and ‘Engagement programs’. But while the sessions had been quite unevenly distributed in 1999, the number of sessions under each category in 2004 were quite equal (between 115 and 120).

As both in 1993 and in 1999, Western presenters clearly outnumbered the others (206 of 368), and in second place came those presenters under the category ‘Mixed’, who also were connected to the West (84 of 368)⁶⁹. One of the criticisms against the Parliament after the earlier Parliaments had been the issue of representation, especially the Western domination of the participants. The official numbers after the 1999 Parliament in South Africa could to some extent counter these complaints, but considering what I was able to observe myself, this criticism could probably also be raised after this one. On the second day of the Parliament, I was invited to a youth gathering held for all the participants under the age of 35. I found the numbers there quite interesting. Without counting, I would roughly estimate that there were 200 people present. As one of the activities we engaged in was to gather in groups according to geographical background, it was easy to see where most of the participants came from. The following numbers are not accurate, as I did not write up the numbers at that point, but are an estimation according to what I remember: 20 people were from Asia, 15 from Africa, 15 from South/Middle-America, 5 from Oceania, 3 from the Middle East (Israel), and the rest were from Europe (65) or the USA (75). Looking at the participants at the whole Parliament during the week, I would say the youth gathering was a representable sample of the geographical distribution of the participants more generally. There were of course many local people from Barcelona and other places in Spain who used the opportunity to participate, so the main impression was that the participants were mostly of Western origins or ties; falling under the categories ‘Western’ or ‘Mixed’. Many from Europe or the USA at the youth gathering came under the ‘Mixed’-category, and were second-generation immigrants.

The two last categories at the Parliament program, ‘Interreligious programs’ and ‘Engagement programs’, were continuations of the 1999 categories ‘Dialogue’ and ‘Critical Issues’. The description of what kind of sessions one could find under these categories was found in the Program book (Program book 2004:24). ‘Interreligious programs’ was

[a] wide variety of programs focusing on (1) structured opportunities for interreligious encounter and dialogue; (2) sharing the convictions and motivations

⁶⁸ In addition there were Plenary Sessions, Symposia, Exhibits etc. See *Appendix: 5*.

⁶⁹ See *Appendix: 6*.

for engaging with each other and the world; and (3) innovative methodologies for interreligious encounter, dialogue and cooperation,

and the 'Engagement programs' consisted of

[a] wide variety of programs focusing on: (1) building capacity for religious and spiritual people, communities and organizations to collaborate with guiding institutions in service to a peaceful, just and sustainable future; (2) examples of successful programs and best practices that are addressing critical issues around the world; and (3) creative approaches and tools for effective dialogue and collaboration.

In other words, the Parliament agenda was, as before, aimed at performative cooperation, at both the interreligious and the systemic level. However, it could be argued that the steering of the sessions was in some sense more successful in 2004 than before. In contrast to 1993 and 1999, the number of sessions where several presenters from various religions participated was dramatically higher, especially in the 'Interreligious program'. In both 1993 and 1999 there had been 38 'Mixed' sessions. In 2004 there were 90⁷⁰. Since the total number of sessions had fallen, there were in 2004 a much larger percentage of sessions where interreligious dialogues actually took place. The number of presenters had not necessarily declined, since each session in average now consisted of more presenters. Also, the percentage of performative sessions had risen slightly from 61% (in 1993) and 60% (in 1999) to 68% (in 2004).

The rise in number of 'Mixed' sessions may explain for example why the number of the other sessions, like the Hindu-sessions, had declined so dramatically, since the representatives now participated with representatives of other religions. Another interesting difference is that it seems as if the New Age participation had fallen in general. There was almost complete absence of identifiable 'New Age' sessions. The big majority of the 'Unclear' in 2004 have been classified as such, not because they have been described in vague New Age terms, but because I have not been able to identify whether the session has been 'Mixed' or representing only one world religion. The 'Theosophical/Anthropological' sessions had also disappeared completely⁷¹.

What was notable about the 2004 Parliament was that the focus this time also was *intrareligious*, which was shown by the category 'Intrareligious programs', starting the main program every day. However, when looking through the Program book, there were in fact few sessions where intrareligious dialogues took place. Those few that occurred had

⁷⁰ See Appendix: 1, 3 and 5.

⁷¹ See Appendix:5.

representatives of various Christian, Pagan or Jewish branches and nominations gathered, but again it seemed as if the presenters were mostly of the liberal or universalist wings. The explanation for the absence of intrareligious sessions despite the fact that a third of the program was consecrated to that theme may be found in the Parliament's definition of intrareligious sessions. Under the heading 'Intrareligious programs' the following could be read (Program book 2004:24):

A wide variety of programs focusing on: (1) a basic understanding of religious and spiritual communities, and the teachings, practices, and dynamics of their traditions; (2) resources and rationales from within religious and spiritual communities and movements for dialogue, engagement, and cooperation; and (3) tools for intrareligious reflection and dialogue.

This description does not correspond to the concept 'intrareligious' in the sense used in this thesis⁷², so the category also includes sessions merely *presenting* the religion, which made the 'Intrareligious' category a continuation of the 'Identity'-category from 1999. Therefore, the sessions presenting the religion often represented only one presenter's point of view, which, of course, could not represent any intrareligious dialogue or differing opinions. Some sessions brought up the topic of the intrareligious challenges represented by exclusivists from the point of view of universalists or academics, but they were rather few.

Some of the explanation for why the CPWR had chosen to define 'Intrareligious' in this way, and why the intrareligious⁷³ sessions were so few, may be explained in the article *Spotlight on "Intra-religious"*, which William Leshner, chair in the CPWR, had written already in 2003. There he gave an explanation for why the focus on intrareligious issues was so important at the Parliament in 2004. As he stated, "this emphasis on intra-religious discussions [...] normally get[s] only secondary consideration within the interreligious process" (Leshner 2003:85). According to him, the process of getting accurate knowledge of a religion is important, not only for outsiders in order to engage in interreligious dialogues, but also for the adherents of the religion themselves. Only through knowledge of one's own religion is it possible to establish a religious identity from which to start an interreligious relationship, and to know how to cooperate properly with the 'religious other' according to tenets and traditions. In other words, one needs to know the 'first-order religious language' before one starts the using the 'second-order'. This reasoning is the same as seen in the 1999-categories 'Identity' and 'Dialogue'. But what he adds is also the need for those religious

⁷² See paragraph 1.4.

⁷³ 'Intrareligious' in the sense used in paragraph 1.4.

adherents who support interreligious dialogues to address those within their religions who do not: “A sensitive, but critical intra-religious task for nearly every spiritual and religious community is to work at developing relationships with conservative groups within their tradition. Many such groups have, to this point, absented themselves from or even denounced the interreligious movement” (Leshner 2003:87). In the article, Leshner recognises that this challenge “will be a difficult dimension for some traditions and their participants to confront” (Leshner 2003:86).

During the interviews conducted in Barcelona, other representatives of the CPWR confirmed Leshner’s points of view. Helen Spector, member of the Board of the Trustees in the CPWR, said that (Spector, Barcelona 2004):

[t]he reason why the focus is on the intrareligious relations is because when you come to interreligious dialogues, one of the things that happens is that people ask you about your faith. So it sends you back into your own tradition, to learn the teachings of your own tradition. And when you go back there, what you find is there is a very broad range of how people interpret their own tradition. So there’s *intrafaith* work that has to be done in order to build an interreligious movement.

Donald Benson, active in the CPWR for several years, also told a story which exemplifies how difficult the intrareligious work is (Benson, Barcelona 2004):

I have a friend, a Jew, whose rabbi has been a member of the [CPWR] Board for many years. She goes to the synagogue regularly for many years, and she asks him two or three weeks ago, because she found out that he was coming and that he was on the Board: “Why is it that you never talk about this in our synagogue?” Well, it’s a difficult thing to do because coming here [at the Parliament] is a liberal act, and there are conservatives within the congregation, so how does he language it, talk about it in a way that doesn’t make the conservatives go away? That’s the challenge.

The foundation of interreligious dialogues is, then, intrareligious dialogues. Not only presentations of the religion as given by one representative, as found at many of the sessions at the Parliament, but by several. The point of view of one presenter may be useful to those of other religions as an introduction, but for those of that same religion, presentations made by representatives of varying intrareligious points of view are what is needed to understand how diverse their religions are. What is shown here is why intrareligious dialogues are so important, both in order to establish interreligious dialogues and in order to ‘neutralise’ the exclusivists, but at the same time why intrareligious dialogues are so challenging. Those in

favour of interreligious cooperation, the universalists, risk alienating the exclusivists and dividing congregations.

An explanation for why intrareligious dialogues may be challenging, is that they may lead to an acknowledgement that the nonnegotiables are not unchanging and static, but that religions always have adapted and been interpreted in different ways. There may be a fear that religions' authority may be threatened by opening up to the recognition that the 'stable' essentials in religions are in fact dynamic processes. The essentialistic perception sustains the impression given that religions are homogeneous and united. In a forum where the discourse is on religions meeting in dialogues with each other, it may be more comfortable to maintain the image of more or less undivided unities. The discourse is on religions as unities around essential nonnegotiables, and thereafter on cooperations on the basis of a joint common ethic on performative matters. This discourse does not fit easily with the discourse of religion as processes, an interpretation that intrareligious dialogues invite. The strategy of appearing united is also, as described earlier, what makes religion able to address other subsystems.

7.1.2 The Commitments and the Global Parliament Community

The Parliament in 1993 resulted in the *Declaration Toward a Global Ethic*, and in 1999 it resulted in the *Call to Our Guiding Institutions*. The written outcomes from the Parliament in 2004 were of a very different character. Instead of a document, the CPWR wanted to continue along the line from 1993 with personal commitments from the *Parliament of the People*, and the individual *Gifts of Service* commitments in 1999. In an interview, Helen Spector put it in this way (Spector, Barcelona 2004):

[W]e have come to understand that there are enough declarations in the world. If people payed attention to them we would never need another new declaration. [...] We don't need to make any more. We want to make people find ways to live what's in those declarations and make a difference where they live.

What the 2004 Assembly represented was a clearer focus on certain challenging issues and a higher estimation of what ordinary people could contribute. Dirk Ficca said that (Ficca, Barcelona 2004):

a thing about the Parliament is: if it doesn't happen at the grassroot-level first, we tend not to be interested.

In addition to the focus on individual commitments on all levels, the way the Assembly was formed was also altered. After the Assembly in Cape Town, the general participants had

complained over the inaccessability of the Assembly-activities. There was in fact a ‘VIP’-Assembly which was open only to those specially invited in 2004 as well, but this took place before the Parliament program was opened in Barcelona. From July 5-7, an Assembly gathered at the Benedictine Monastery at Montserrat to discuss four issues: How to improve the plight of refugees, how to eliminate international debt for poor countries, how to overcome religiously motivated violence, and how to increase access to clean water. The concern from 1993 and 1999 over the general crisis in the world had now been narrowed down to focus on four key-issues. The Assembly consisted of about 400 people. These were religious leaders and activists, experts in the issues addressed, young people, and those impacted by the problems. As in 1999, the participants could choose which issue they wanted to work on. Then, the participants of the Montserrat-assembly were asked to write down their own individual commitments on how each and every person wanted to make a contribution to the world.

In Barcelona, all participants got the opportunity to take part of the Assembly itself, as it was repeated and was open for everybody during the days of July 9-12. Thousands of participants could discuss the four issues, and also make their own personal commitments (Program book 2004:59-60). The commitments would state how they, as individuals with their resources and possibilities, could change their own communities in a positive way. The Parliament 2004 resulted in several hundred of Commitment cards, describing a number of projects activated, stretching over a variety of communities, ranging from the very simple actions on the grassroot-level to the structural initiatives taken by the top-leaders in institutions (Spector, Barcelona 2004).

After 1999 the CPWR had not been able to follow up on whether the commitments made at Cape Town had been fulfilled, but in 2004 they had the resources to do so. The plan was to put all the commitments in a web-based infrastructure through which they could reach each and every person, and after six months take contact and see if the commitment had been implemented, and what progress had been made. Further, they would also make connections between those with similar commitments to facilitate their tasks. Water-projects taking place in different countries could be ‘matched’ so similar problems could be discussed and the experiences exchanged. This is what the CPWR called the *Global Parliament Community*, supported by a web-based infrastructure on www.cpwrglobal.net (Benson, Barcelona 2004). But one did not have to take part of the Assemblies to engage in the Global Parliament Community. In the main building there were several computers available where the participants could log on to the net and there give some information about themselves and

what they wanted to do. In this way, the Parliament led to an active engagement of local projects all over the world in the interreligious movement. The divide between the religious 'elite' and the 'grassroot' was downscaled, as both an archbishop's and a normal youth's commitments were equally valued.

The activities and initiatives described here were results of the engagement within the interreligious movement, working on generally socially concerned, performative issues in a religiously pluralistic world. But there were also meetings where the more anti-secular line was pursued, and where representatives of the interreligious social movement were gathered.

7.2 The NIIO at the Parliament

As there was not such a clear anti-secular agenda within the Parliament in 2004, I chose to take part in the symposium *On Religions and International Institutions*, where several of the presenters were members of the organisations in the NIIO. Here the anti-secular interreligious social movement's aim of approaching secular sectors, and especially the UN, was on the program, which was obvious in the description of the symposium (Program book 2004:72):

The aim of the Symposium is to increase understanding and cooperation between religious communities & organisations and international institutions. [...] It attempts to strengthen the engagement with the UN System as a partner for intercultural and interreligious encounters and projects.

There seemed to be a general frustration among the presenters over the UN's lingering secularity, alongside a desire for a body which could present religion as a whole on the systemic level. Felix Marti, former director of the UNESCO in Catalonia, who also had been involved in the meeting in 1994 leading to the *Declaration on the Role of Religion in the Promotion of a Culture of Peace* (internet37), expressed his disappointment over the way religion constantly was overlooked within the UN and UNESCO. His opinions were shared by Azza Karam, who worked for the WCRP as director for the Women's Program:

[T]here is a secular monopoly that exists within a number of the UN-member states. Specifically those sitting on the Security Council, which is the main decision-making body in the UN. I will go so far to say that there is a secular fundamentalism *trend* within a number of the[se] UN-member states [...] (Karam, Barcelona 2004).

She had, together with Joan Kirby, representative of the ToU, taken part in the *Committee of Religious NGOs at the UN*, and gave examples of how little the UN acknowledged the role

religion played in the world, and especially when it came to the contribution religious institutions gave through performative projects. They agreed on the problem of dividedness within religion:

There is a clear divide between religious leadership, institutions and grassroots faith-based initiatives. That means that if an international institution like the UN should say "Right, let's take religion seriously!", *who* do they approach? Where would they begin? Yes, the ECOSOC has a whole list of religious organisations the UN could approach, but let's be realistic: Who will it be that they end up approaching? And how easy would that process be? Will it go to the individual religious leaders, which they do? They invite them to forums, and in that case they would go to conferences and say their speeches. And then? What? [...] Can that be systematised a little bit better? Yes. It depends not only on the UN, but to a great deal of the religious communities themselves on how to organise and mobilise and approach the UN (Karam, Barcelona 2004).

We're talking about international institutions, the UN [...] and religion. Like Azza, I would like to say: which religion? Which religious or interfaith organisation? Is there anyone who speaks with the voice of religions? And the answer, obviously, is 'no'. [...] [I]f we as religious people are going to commit ourselves to that world community, which is a great ideal, don't we have to be as religious [people] a sector of the community, a harmonious voice in the world community? It doesn't mean that we don't differ, that we have our moments. But it strikes me that we really need to work fervently toward the achievement of a united voice of some kind. Otherwise, which one of us is the international organisation to trust? Which one of us should they go to consult (Kirby, Barcelona 2004)?

What was expressed was, in other words, a wish for a united religion which on certain important points could stand together as an undivided subsystem alongside other subsystems. This reflects the agenda of the whole Parliament to unite religions, through the ethical-practical bridge, on a basis of ethic. Marti, Karam and Kirby agreed that there was a need of a body attached to the UN which could represent religion in a proper way in order to unite the diverse voices and authorities existing within the religious arena:

[I]t would be good to have a permanent committee established by the UN, to establish the relations between the UN-system and the religious traditions with one main person in charge of the body, a high commissioner, like it is normal to have for the Human Rights and other bodies of our concern. This does not exist. We have some positive experiences with this, but we need a permanent body/committee in charge of these relations. The task of this body would be to establish the contact with the religions; the authorities and the peoples of different religions. And to invite representatives of the main religions to cooperate with the UN in several fields (Marti, Barcelona 2004).

Working closely with the UN Karam and Kirby could report in their sessions how the secretary general Kofi Annan had appointed a *Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations–Civil Society Relations* to study how to make the civil society more effective at the UN. Seeing this as the opportunity to make religion more influential within the organisation, they drafted a proposal of establishing a special office in the UN Secretariat to religion. Gerardo Gonzales, project director of the SFUN, presented at the same symposia how the Panel, as a result of the proposal, had in its report made references to religion:

In its report, issued [a] few weeks ago, the Panel urges multi-constituency strategies and a shift of focus from "*generalized assemblies to specific networks*" as well as the need to "*galvanize, support and incubate partnerships in operations and deliberations*". The Panel is also of the view that some civil society constituencies – among them the “religious and spiritual groups”- deserve greater attention by the United Nations because of their explicit representational roles or wide memberships. Although the Panel does not suggest the creation of a specific organ for this constituency, it recommends in general the creation of a new kind of partner for accreditation by the UN: The network partners, defined as *transnational networks and caucuses that include a significant number of organizations either active on a given issue or from a particular constituency*. The spiritual forum, which would operate as a network, would fit in this new category of partners (Gonzales, Barcelona 2004).

The Spiritual Forum could then be the body representing a united religion on the systemic level, thus also making religion more influential on matters earlier the domain of the secular subsystems. Some months before the Parliament, in May 2004, a *Partnership Committee* of the SFUN-project wrote a first draft of a proposal for the establishment of such a forum, to be circulated to religious and spiritual leaders and organisations (Gonzales, Barcelona 2004).

In the symposium, then, the interreligious social movement expressed the agenda evident through all the Parliament programs: the desire to establish a unified religious voice on the basis of performative ethic which in turn could operate on the systemic level to obtain more influence in the secular society. For even if the Parliament in 2004 had downscaled the anti-secular agenda in the more mass-movement oriented Commitments, versus 1993 and 1999 declarations and assemblies, it did not necessarily mean that it had disappeared from the Parliament vision. It could rather be interpreted as the recognition of the pressing need for intrareligious focus first, and the wish to involve the whole movement. But at the same time as the intrareligious focus thus gained more attention, the interreligious social movement continued its anti-secular line, as seen at the symposium. It is important to bear in mind that it seems as if the interreligious social movement is based on the broad movement, so to draw the conclusion that the first can work independently and separately from the other is not

necessarily right. That could easily deprive the interreligious social movement of the authority it needs from the 'grassroot' level. However, as demonstrated at the Parliament events, the interreligious movement generally consists of the Western linked liberal or universalist religious adherents; the inclusivists, pluralists and accepters. So the question one can ask is whether the credibility of the movement, and eventually a Spiritual Forum, is not undermined by the continued absence of the clearly non-Western participants, and the more conservative exclusivists who do not support performative interreligious cooperation. The main question then becomes what can be done by the interreligious movement to obtain such credibility? What is required is not only the credibility within all camps of religion, but also the credibility in the eyes of the secular agencies. As shown after the terrorist attacks, the acts performed by the most extreme religious exclusivists undermine religion's credibility in the eyes of the secular advocates. The answer may well be the need to engage in intrareligious dialogues. But the religious discourse dominant at the anti-secular symposium was one of essentialism, based on religion as one system united by an essential common global ethic on performative matters. The demand that religion should talk with one 'harmonious voice' does not fit with a discourse where intrareligious dialogues acknowledge religions as dynamic processes. The challenge lies in how to make the exclusivists engage in dialogues with the inclusivists/pluralists/accepters in an intrareligious processual discourse.

Summary

At the Parliament in 2004 the CPWR shifted some of the focus onto intrareligious dialogues. For the performative interreligious movement and the anti-secular interreligious social movement to obtain recognition and credibility, that may have been what was needed. However, the presenters and participants did not seem to follow up on that. Some of the explanation may be the fact that the essential discourse going through the whole Parliament does not correspond with the processual discourse.

CHAPTER 8: NEXT CHALLENGES?

- Les géographies, dit le géographe, sont les livres les plus sérieux de tous les livres. Elles ne se démodent jamais. Il est très rare qu'une montagne change de place. Il est très rare qu'un océan se vide de son eau. Nous écrivons des choses éternelles. [...] Nous ne notons pas les fleurs, dit le géographe.
 - Pourquoi ça! c'est le plus joli!
 - Parce que les fleurs sont éphémères. [...] ça signifie "qui est menacé de disparition prochaine".
 - Ma fleur est menacée de disparition prochaine?
 - Bien sûr.⁷⁴
- (Antoine de Saint-Exupéry 1997:56)

Introduction

In the final chapter I will discuss how the Western dominance in the interreligious movement may be seen as the main challenge to intrareligious dialogues, while it in fact is the essentialistic discourse maintaining the perception of religions as static unities which hinders dialogues between universalists and exclusivists. I will also propose how these challenges may be addressed for the interreligious movement to attain credibility beyond the Western universalist circles.

8.1 Western essentialism?

The IIC is aware of weaknesses in the interreligious movement, and emphasises in particular two points: the first is that "[t]he interfaith work is still very largely led by people and organisations from the Christian West. [...] [W]e need to find ways of talking to people who find interfaith activities an abomination (or a "Western plot")", and the second is that "[i]nterfaith work is carried out solely by the "progressive" sectors/people of the different religions, leaving out the majority who either are indifferent to other faiths or think that they are nowhere near God or the Truth" (internet38). These quotes point to the two main

⁷⁴ - Books about geography, says the geographer, are the most serious of all books. They are never outdated. It is very rare that a mountain changes place. It is very rare that an ocean becomes dry. We write about eternal things. [...] We do not write about flowers, says the geographer.

- But why not? That's the prettiest!

- Because flowers are ephemeral.[...] That means "that which is threatened to disappear quite soon".

- My flower is threatened to disappear quite soon?

- Of course.

[My own translation.]

challenges for the interreligious movement: its Western dominance and its absence of exclusivists. I will in the following treat both the subjects.

8.1.1 Western?

When analysing differences between various parties, it is easy to turn to cultural reasons as explanations. Especially when talking about religions, the 'West' and the 'Rest' is a classification that to many seems suitable, according to Huntington's idea of the 'Clash of the Civilizations'. But how useful is such a divide in the globalised world where ideas, concepts and cultures meet and influence each other? In addressing the challenge of getting the inclusivists/pluralists/accepters and the exclusivists to engage in intrareligious dialogues, I will first discuss how much Western discourse has to do with the differences between them. One of the main questions one can ask regarding the interreligious movement is to which degree it is dominated by Western participants. And if it is dominated in that way, is that one of the hindrances to intrareligious dialogues? Is there a Western/non-Western aspect to the differences between the liberal universalist inclusivists/pluralists/accepters and the conservative exclusivists?

I will first start with the exclusivists. There are plenty of examples of Western exclusivist religious adherents. This was, for example, shown by those who demonstrated outside of the Parliament venues against the interreligious dialogues. The acts of religious violence committed in the recent years also show that adherents born and/or educated in the West, in other words also in the 'Mixed', may be extreme exclusivists. There are additional numerous examples demonstrating the existence of exclusivists and fundamentalists from the West, Christian as well as non-Christian. In other words, exclusivists are not only non-Western.

Turning to the universalists; the large majority of the Parliament presenters were of Western origins⁷⁵. In addition, most of the international interreligious organisations are, according to the IIC, founded by Western initiatives (internet38). There are a number of 'Non-Western' who are also active in the interreligious movement, but the statistics from the Parliament show that the 'Mixed' category represents most presenters after 'Western'. That is, of the people involved in the Parliament and the interreligious movement, many are first or second generation immigrants. It is therefore difficult to apply the distinction Western/non-Western clearly in this regard. But even though the majority of the participants were linked to the West in some way, there are also participants who were not. It is also prudent to take into consideration that when it comes to the Parliament events, travel and accommodation expenses,

⁷⁵ See *Appendix: 2,4,6*.

registration fees etc., may have considerable influence on who participates. In addition, a number of more local interreligious activities take place around the whole world, even though their activists may not be visible in the Parliament or in the NIIO. So one can therefore not generalise that it is only, or even primarily, those with a Western connection who are universalists, even though they are the majority in the cases mentioned in this paper. There are in addition a lot of bilateral interreligious dialogues going on which I have not taken account of here.

In other words, one can not categorically conclude that only those with Western ties are universalists, and that exclusivists are only non-Western. Nonetheless, the fact remains that the majority of the interreligious activists are either 'Western' or 'Mixed', at least those participating in the movement as discussed here. One reason may be because of the secularisation existing in the West, or in the international systemic society, which is dominated by the secularisation originating from the West. The Parliament is linked to the West, the religion/secularism dichotomy is Western, and the interreligious movement's anti-secularity agenda is based on an originally Western structure. It is therefore probably not surprising that most of those engaged in the movement are connected to the West. Still, even though 'religion' is a concept derived from the West⁷⁶, it is today used all over the world to describe all traditions of faith, and as the division between religion and non-religion is existent on the international systemic level, it does not concern only the West. The distinction between the West and other cultures, when it comes to religious affairs, therefore does not seem to be the main challenge in intrareligious dialogues.

The intrareligious dialogues should thus not take place only between, for example, Western universalists and non-Western exclusivists, but between universalists and exclusivists from all backgrounds. Huntington's divide between the 'West' and the 'Rest' is not appropriate for describing the intrareligious differences. But were the interreligious movement, and in particular the interreligious *social* movement, to gain international credibility and pursue its anti-secular agenda, it would probably be wise to consider ways to make the non-Western advocates more visible.

8.1.2 Essentialism?

As seen in the previous chapters, both the interreligious movement and the religious exclusivists use discourses based on religious essentialism in the pursuit of their various interests. Their authority and claims are founded on nonnegotiables they perceive as static,

⁷⁶ See paragraph 1.1.

supernaturally given, and absolute truths. Those who disagree in their interpretations, views and actions are labelled as ‘misusers of religion’ and ‘false practitioners’, not only by exclusivists, but also by universalists, as shown in the DTGE and the Call⁷⁷. Their absolute beliefs are strategical discourses aimed at obtaining something. At the interreligious forum where the ‘unities of religions’ meet, the essential discourse is useful in order to know who the ‘religious other’ is, and at the systemic level, the essential discourse of religious performance is useful in order to appear as one united subsystem. In the interreligious movement the authoritative nonnegotiables are not discussed as long as the interpretations of them support performative attitudes. For religious exclusivists and fundamentalists, the essential discourse is useful to fight for one’s own eternal truth against all irreligion. The nonnegotiables are not discussed as their authority is an undiscussable truth. In order to establish intrareligious dialogues where interpretations of the nonnegotiables could be discussed, the essential discourses have to be replaced with processual discourses. The challenge is to let go of the interest-oriented strategical discourses and turn to a dialogue where one acknowledges that nonnegotiables are not static and unchangeable, and that the interpretations of them are humanly conditioned. The parties in the dialogue must, then, use the ‘first-order religious language’ and open up for a more relativistic, processual understanding within the frames of their own religion, instead of the absolutist essentialism.

What I have tried to show here is that there is no Western/non-Western division between universalists and exclusivists, and that they all use essential discourses. There is no ‘Western essentialism’, as essentialism is used by sides in all cultures. The intrareligious challenge is not one based on culture, but on type of discourse. The next question to ask is then who will be the ones who engage in the intrareligious dialogues? If one looks at the interreligious movement, who will be the ones who approach the religious exclusivists? When talking about possible future projects, it is helpful to discuss the religious leaders of the future.

⁷⁷ “Of course religions are credible only when they eliminate those conflicts which spring from the religions themselves, dismantling mutual arrogance, mistrust, prejudice, and even hostile images, and thus demonstrate respect for the traditions, holy places, feasts, and rituals of people who believe differently” (DTGE:7). “In the long historical struggle to realize their respective visions [...] the world’s religious and spiritual communities have sometimes adopted divisive, unjust, inhumane and Earth-denying attitudes and practices. [...] All too often, these relations have been marred by intolerance, oppression, and even violence, dramatically undermining efforts to build a better world” (Call:5).

8.2 The youth?

In order to establish intrareligious dialogues there is a need to find representative universalists within all religions. If one starts with the interreligious movement and the Parliament, the 'Mixed' category participants may be the key. These participants, who are first or second generation immigrants, represent a wide spectrum of religions, and are advocates of the values promoted by the interreligious movement. As noted during the youth gathering in Barcelona, a large number were of other cultural origins than the Western. Those in the 'Mixed'-category are religious minorities in the countries they live in, and in the academic work done on religious changes in diaspora⁷⁸, certain interesting traits emerge within this group of young people, which may show why the youth are suitable inclusivist/pluralist/accepter-representatives in intrareligious dialogues.

8.2.1 Religion versus culture in the religious minority

First of all, those living as religious minorities are more likely to consciously experience the religious pluralism as a reality in their daily life than are those living as the religious majority. One example is the celebration in societies of public holidays and celebrations regulated according to a religion different to one's own (Baumann 1992, Yalçin-Heckmann 1994). When one as a minority is a 'religious other', religion is also more likely to be an important part of one's identity created, than if one as a member of the majority takes the religious infusion in the surrounding as a given (Roald 2002:103). First generation immigrants often seem to interpret their minority cultural and religious customs even more traditionally and conservatively than what is done in their countries of origin, in an attempt to hold on to their own particular identity *vis-à-vis* the majority society (Schiffauer 1998:150 ff.). However, the second and third generations often take another approach. One of the strategies used to maintain their religious identity but at the same time blend into their surroundings, is to separate 'religion' and 'culture' (Vertovec and Peach 1997:40, Yalçin-Heckmann 1994:192). Those traditions which do not easily fit with the society they live in, is seen as dispensable 'cultural traditions', while they see religion as the principles and dogmas they can believe in. This separation is used in order to adapt to the cultural surroundings, but at the same time not 'betray' the eternal, authoritative religious nonnegotiables. When living in a society where one is part of the religious majority, one is often not aware of the religious principles and beliefs lying behind customs and practices, as one is when one becomes a religious minority.

⁷⁸ The notion 'diaspora' is contested and debated when it comes to the study of religious minorities. See Vertovec 2000.

As a minority, one is often forced to learn what the underlying nonnegotiables are as the religiously motivated customs in the surroundings disappear, and one may have to adapt those customs to new situations and premises. In addition, religious minorities are often asked 'what they believe in', and then often go through a process of becoming more conscious of the nonnegotiables than before⁷⁹ (Schiffauer 1988:152 ff.). By separating belief and customs/tradition, there is often a gradual change from orthopraxi to orthodoxi; in other words an increased focus on the religious 'essentials', which they interpret according to the culture they live in. This makes the younger generation more liberal on points like gender equality, and they often feel alienated from traditional religious leaders who they feel stand for a religious line which is unsuitable in their situations (Jacobsen 1997:446 ff., Ramadan 2002:158 ff., Smith 2002:9). What can be seen in religious minority societies is an upsurge of 'umbrella'-organisations where, for example, several Muslim or Hindu organisations, separated by national or ethnical differences, form joint councils, networks or boards to represent ecumenical pan-Islam or pan-Hindu interests. Frequently, the youth also form ecumenical organisations themselves, which are open to those who identify with that religion (Ramadan 2002:159 f., Jacobsen 1997:445). It is often first in a new country as a religious minority that immigrants become aware of the intrareligious differences existing within their own religions (Schiffauer 1988:155). What makes these pan-religious identities possible seems to be exactly the focus on the 'fundamental essentials' in the religions, where the cultural 'accoutrements' are not so important (Williams in Vertovec 2000:28). In other words, the young generation of immigrants⁸⁰ transform their religions' authoritative nonnegotiables with creative interpretations to suit the religious plurality they are faced with. These young people, who are often better integrated in the religious pluralist society than their parents, are thus promoters of a more liberal line than others of the same religions, and are used to intrareligious dialogues in a processual discourse. Perhaps this group therefore also is the one to take part in the intrareligious dialogues necessary to support the interreligious movement.

One of the potential weaknesses of using these young people in intrareligious dialogues is that they can be seen as too 'Western' by the exclusivists, not only by the exclusivists with no Western linkages at all, but also by those in the 'Mixed' category. Some of the more hard-core exclusivists are exactly among the second or third generation immigrants in the West today, who embrace very 'conservative' interpretations of the nonnegotiables, and those who

⁷⁹ This is the process already described by Helen Spector in section 7.1.1.

⁸⁰ If they can be called such, since many have lived their whole lives in the countries their ancestors came to, and are citizens thereof.

endorse more liberal interpretations may be seen as 'traitors' (Marty 2005:31, 34 f., 40). Still, as both sides are familiar with using the same 'first-order' language, there may be considerable potential for obtaining fruitful intrareligious dialogues. And within the interreligious movement, there already exist very youth-oriented projects.

8.2.2 The Next Generation

After the foundation of the IFYC in 1998, at the Parliament in 1999 there was a specific program for the youth called *Next Generation*. It was "dedicated to nurturing transformative communities through the power, energy, and enthusiasm of today's young leadership" (Program book 1999:18 ff.). Several young representatives played an active part of IIC's symposium *Interfaith in action in a global context* (Program book 1999:24, internet39), and in addition, in the more open Assembly the same year, 25 representatives of the Next Generation took part (Summary Report 1999:9).

In 2001, IFYC became one of the members in the NIIO, and the same year, CPWR started a project in Chicago called the *Interfaith Service House* (internet40), which enables young people of different religious, cultural and ethnical backgrounds to live and work together in order to get to know each other better.

At the Parliament in 2004, around 50 people representing the *Next Generation* again took part at the Assembly (Spector, Barcelona 2004). There was no separate program for youth as in 1999, but there was a loose youth program (Program book 2004:104, 142, 225): there was a youth gathering already at the first main day (Program book 2004:95), there was a stand for youth to keep up with the youth-targeted sessions in the main lobby, special attention was given to the youth-participants at the Closing Plenary, and there were possibilities for young people to take part at the *Parliament Academy* (Program book 2004:58, 80).

Also within the WCRL there has been a strong focus on youth, and in October 2004 there was planned to organise a *World Youth Peace Summit* in Kenya. It has, however, been postponed to the beginning of 2006 (internet41).

Although these are just a few examples of youth-oriented activities within the interreligious movement, it shows that there is an awareness of the potential found in today's young people, and the need for their resources in the time to come. These activities all have the more general performative focus of the interreligious movement, but perhaps the neglected challenge with the intrareligious dialogues is one of the issues these people are well qualified to handle.

What also may be useful when it comes to ‘educating’ youth in intrareligious dialogues is to find the universalists without any Western backgrounds, who may not be accused of being ‘Westoxicated’ (poisoned by Western influence) and traitors. The challenge lies in finding these youth, since most of the youth initiatives, as the IFYC, seems to exist in the West.

8.3 The intrareligious forum

8.3.1 Where?

Another question regarding potential future intrareligious dialogues between universalists and exclusivists, is in what forum or surroundings they should take place. Whether intrareligious dialogues should be established at the interreligious forums or not is a difficult question. On the one hand, those forums focus on *inter*religious relationships. However, as the Parliament has shown, these forums may bring up both systemic and intrareligious issues, as well as the interreligious ones. Nonetheless, outside the Parliament there are plenty of forums within the various religions where the differences between exclusivists and universalists may be discussed. International ecumenical organisations exist within all major religions⁸¹. But they seem mainly to focus on the differences between the varying denominations, branches and wings, rather than on universalist/exclusivist differences (although the different denominations may represent differences in tolerance to the ‘religious others’ as well). An idea could be to treat the disagreements between the exclusivists and universalists more directly in these ecumenical forums. I do not know to what degree these kinds of intrareligious topics have been treated in the ecumenical forums, but if the existing intrareligious dialogues actually had led to more support for the interreligious movement from exclusivists, would it not be likely that this would have been evident through their participation at, for example, the Parliament? However, the main concern is that intrareligious issues are addressed, regardless of the forum, in order to obtain interreligious collaborations which are representative of the whole religion, not only part of it. By engaging in intrareligious dialogues, the adherents may feel better prepared to engage in interreligious dialogues as well. And when engaging in interreligious dialogues, they may come to understand that the intrareligious differences are not that big after all (Evers 1998:242 f.).

⁸¹ I use the term ecumenical to describe intrareligious forums in all religions, even though the term normally is used on Christian organs.

8.3.2 The Parliament

If the Parliament wants to reflect a broader international religious community than it does today, one of the challenges is to find non-Western cities to host future events, in order to draw more participants who do not have Western ties or background. I believe that will give the Parliament more credibility in those circles that are sceptical of Western agendas, and may thus also help the interreligious movement to get rid of its Western-dominated character. The 1999 Parliament was hosted in South Africa, but the majority of the presenters was still Western, even though the geographical background of the registrants seemed to change from the 1993 and 2004 Parliaments (Summary Report 1999:4). Taking as a starting-point the cities in the *Partner Cities* project of the CPWR (Program book 2004:88), it would be interesting to see the Parliament organised in New Dehli or Kerala in India, where religious pluralism is deep, and the geographical location possibly could draw new participants. Other options could, for example, be in Taipei in Taiwan, or Quezon City in the Philippines. Placing the Parliament-event in Jerusalem in Israel could also be quite interesting considering the tense political and religious situation there. Another option, although they contain no members of the Partner Cities project, could be to organise the event in countries like Saudi Arabia or Jordan. Despite the practical difficulties these alternatives may present, and the fact that the latter two ones may not offer the same religiously pluralistic environment as the Partner Cities-members, the possibilities could none the less give interesting results. In the case of Jerusalem in particular, the security and restrictions could pose a problem, and placing an interreligious event like the Parliament there would probably give rise to discussions. But is it not exactly in those situations the interreligious movement can be of most use as well?

By considering non-Western options for the location of the Parliament, the Western imprint on both the event and the interreligious movement as a whole could slowly be replaced by an international approval. Of course, different approaches can be adopted by institutions other than the CPWR, but as the Parliament is a forum which draws an impressive number of people of all kinds and levels, it both reflects and influences the interreligious movement as a whole. Therefore the event has the opportunity to show that the tolerant universalistic approach is not an invention of the West, but fits equally well with African, South-American, Arab or Asian values. By drawing non-Western universalists, the chances of successfully engaging in intrareligious dialogues with exclusivists also increase. Even though meetings with the 'religious other' can reduce exclusivistic attitudes, the challenge is the exclusivists who are unable or unwilling to meet or openly listen to and learn from the 'others'. Therefore, a persuasive change of attitude with respect to tolerance has to come from

those the exclusivists feel belong to their own camps, ethnically, geographically and religiously. Only by gaining wide support internationally, from both liberal and conservative representatives, can the international interreligious movement obtain the credibility it already claims to have. And only by gaining such support can the international social movement justifiably defend its anti-secular agenda as representative of religion as a subsystem.

As there have been protesters demonstrating against the interreligious dialogues outside of the Parliament events during all the three last Parliaments, a possible threat in the future may be those who show up not only with posters, but with bombs. The safety and results of the interreligious movement at the Parliament may depend on how the universalists choose to approach the exclusivists. So far it has seemed as if the universalist tone of the events has resulted in most exclusivists staying away, as they have felt their nonnegotiables have not been properly appreciated. Participation at the Parliaments is voluntary, but perhaps a more active outreach and invitation to the exclusivist wings by the CPWR may lead to a greater participation of those who until now have chosen to stay away. A higher number of exclusivists at the events may lead to more intrareligious discussions and dialogues taking place, which may be very useful to the whole interreligious movement.

Summary

In this final chapter I have presented some of the challenges facing the interreligious movement when it comes to intrareligious dialogues, first and foremost the reputation it has as ‘Western’. I have argued that the challenge is one of the type of discourse, not of culture, and how the cultural trademark of the movement may be replaced by international acceptance, both in general and at the Parliament.

CONCLUSION

The insight, that *without peace among the religions there cannot be peace in this world*, has become something like a mantra, repeated again and again. But like other mantras, too, it does not seem to be effective in the practical dealings among the adherents of different religious traditions (Georg Evers 2004:235).

In this thesis, I have tried to shed some light on several points. The first point is *that the socially engaged interreligious activities represent an anti-secular agenda* where the presentation of all religions as one unity is an attempt to counter the secular tendencies in the international arena. This policy, aimed particularly towards the international secular systems and institutions, is evident in the Parliament's focus on religious performance, which serves as a 'glue' to make the religions appear united. However, anti-secularity is not the only motivation behind the interreligious activities. The anti-secular agenda was in place already at the first Parliament in 1893, using religious performance as a strategy, but the increase of pluralism in the century to 1993 has led to a development where religious performance has also become a tool in achieving peaceful interreligious cohabitation in a religiously pluralistic society. Religious performance is therefore used in these two different ways at the Parliament events in 1993, 1999 and 2004; both as a general practical concern in the interreligious movement, and as an anti-secular strategy in the interreligious social movement. It seems cynical to assume that the interreligious movement comes solely out of a desire for power in the anti-secular agenda. An honest belief that religions have something positive to contribute to the world, regardless of systemic interests, may well be the main engine behind the interreligious activities.

The second point is that *the belief in religion as a peace-making resource as used in the interreligious movement is based on an essentialistic discourse of religion*. In the interreligious dialogues at the Parliament, it seems as if the religions meet each other on the assumption that they are separated by certain essential nonnegotiables, but joined by an essential ethical concern over practical matters, as seen in the DTGE. The ethic is then displayed as the essential core when religion as a subsystem relates to the secular subsystems, as seen in the Call. However, *this interreligious ethical essential attracts mostly inclusivists, pluralists and accepters*, which is seen through how little participation there has been from the exclusivists, and how little focus there has been on intrareligious differences at the Parliament, even in 2004. This leads up to the third point.

The third point is that *essentialistic discourse is also what makes up the basis for the exclusivistic, fundamentalistic attitude* where religion is used as an element in the fight between the categories ‘us’ and ‘them’. Both interreligiousness and fundamentalism can be seen as attempts to de-secularise the international society, but their approaches to attaining this goal are very different. The advocates of the interreligious approach turn to peaceful dialogues and cooperations, while advocates of the exclusivist/fundamentalist view often turn to violence. The first group embraces religious diversity in an attempt to build bridges, both between religions and between religion and the secular society, while the second claims the divine uniqueness of one religious group opposed to all others and try to destroy those who have a different world-view. That is why *the exclusivists impede interreligious activities*, especially in the eyes of the secular agencies.

The fourth point is that *these two opposite ways of using religion demonstrates the disparities existing within religions, which can be understood through a processual discourse of religion*. For the interreligious agencies the exclusivist or fundamentalist representatives pose a threat to the goals they seek for two reasons: First, *the recognition of religions as dynamic processes is problematic to acknowledge, as it undermines the eternal and unchangeable principles which the very religious authority is founded on*. Second, *the interreligious essentialistic discourse and the intrareligious processual discourse serve different aims, and in the anti-secular agenda the intrareligious discourse may weaken the image of religion that the interreligious social movement wishes to promote*. However, *in order to obtain credibility on behalf of religion as a whole, the interreligious advocates need to face the exclusivists intrareligiously*, even though the acknowledgement of internal disagreements is problematic when trying to make religion appear as one strong, unified system.

The fifth point is that *the interreligious movement, at least as demonstrated by the organisations and agencies presented in this thesis, seems to be dominated by participants with a Western background. It may therefore seem as if the universalist approach is a product of the West, and that the divide between universalists and exclusivists is one of cultures between ‘the West’ and ‘the Rest’*. However, *the intrareligious challenge is not cultural, but rather a matter of the type of discourse used by religious adherents*.

The tendency is that the Parliament as a forum, the NIIO, and the planned Spiritual Forum all exclude exclusivists and fundamentalists. Even though they promote values which clash somewhat with the values of the exclusivists, they have to acknowledge that portraying religion as a unity based on universal performative concerns does not take account for the

internal differences within religions. In a world where the dominant international values, as promoted in the UN-system, are based on an idea of a global village and the humanity as a whole, the interreligious groups have to engage in dialogues with the religious adherents who feel otherwise. To claim that acts of intolerance and violence in the name of religion is 'false religion' is to brush the problem aside too easily. The interreligious proponents should rather admit that religious nonnegotiables and ethics can validly be interpreted in different ways, and that this does not undermine the authority of their beliefs. For the interreligious social movement to have credibility both with secular subsystems and their own religious communities, it has to open its forums for those who differ in opinion. Excluding the exclusivists, even by their own choice, is not the solution.

I do not want to make any statements on whether I think the interreligious anti-secularity agenda is desirable and productive or not. However, I think the general goal demonstrated by the interreligious movement, of working towards a peaceful co-existence in a society of religious pluralism, is admirable. The challenge lies in whether the interreligious movement is capable of making the exclusivists and universalists engage in dialogues in an intrareligious processual discourse or not. If it will succeed remains to be seen.

APPENDIX

METHOD OF ANALYSIS OF THE PARLIAMENT

The analysis of the Parliament is based on the Program books. Changes in the program and the sessions that occurred during the events have not been taken account of, since the book was printed before the Parliaments were opened. I focus mainly on the sessions given as presentations, lectures, seminars, debates, discussions and papers, not sessions with performances, films, exhibitions etc.

Classification of the presenters

The classification of the presenters has been based on the information provided about them in the Program books. The categorisation criteria have been the names and the information given about their lives, first and foremost where they are based professionally. The information was occasionally sparse, so I have also searched the internet for more information on each presenter where I have had doubts. I am aware that the criteria are vague and the information available insufficient, and that the presenter personally may not agree with my categorisation.

I have not categorised all the presenters of all the sessions, due to the high number of presenters. I have therefore chosen to categorise only certain parts of the sessions according to the presenters' origins, to give a sample. I have not taken account of the fact that a presenter may have given several sessions, but rather counted the same presenter as many times as she/he was presented in the Program book.

The categories used to analyse the 1993 Parliament were:

USA = The name has been 'English-sounding', and further information connects the presenter to the USA.

Western = The name has been 'Western', and/or further information connects the presenter to the West (first and foremost Europe).

(‘USA’ is only a specification of ‘Western’, and several of the presenters in ‘Western’ may be better placed in ‘USA’, but in these cases the information regarding that connection was absent.)

Mixed = The name is 'non-Western', but further information (especially about the presenter's work place, as many are professors at Western universities) connects the presenter to the West in such a way that it is likely that his/her identity is connected to several cultures.

Indian = Indian name and further information which shows that the presenter has ties to India. The presenter is for example not a professor at a Western university.

Non-Western = 'Non-Western' name and no information showing connections to the West, but to other countries.

Uncertain = 'Non-Western' name, but no information connected to any specific geography. The presenter may both be 'Mixed' and 'Non-Western'.

The reason why I chose to add only 'Indian' in addition to 'Non-Western' was that the participation of Indians as one group in comparison to other nationalities was strikingly high.

For the analysis of the Parliament in 1999 I chose to change the categories slightly:

Mixed 1 = The name is 'non-Western', but further information (especially about the presenter's workplace, as many are professors at Western universities) connects the presenter to the West. Those of non-Western descent from after the start of the 1900s.

African = The name is African and/or further information connects the presenter to Africa

Mixed 2 = The name is 'non-African', but further information connects the presenter to Africa. Those of non-African descent from after the colonisation.

Non-Western = 'Non-Western' name and no information showing connections to either the West or Africa, but to other countries.

('Indian' and 'African' are sub-categories of 'Non-Western'.)

Uncertain = The name is 'non-Western', but no information connected to any specific geography. The presenter may both be 'Mixed 1', 'Mixed 2' and 'Non-Western'. Or, the name is Western, but no information connects the presenter to any geography.

For 1999 I chose to add 'African' because the Parliament took place in South-Africa, and a higher number of Africans could therefore be expected to participate than in 1993. The 'Mixed 1' and 'Mixed 2' are categories used when the names and information given indicate that the presenter is of a different national origin than the majority in the society he/she lives in.

In 2004 I chose to add 'South American' because the Parliament was open to the Spanish-speaking people, and one could therefore expect a higher number of presenters from South America than in 1993 and in 2004.

South-American = The name is Spanish-sounding, and further information connects the presenter to South America.

Classification of the sessions

I have first and foremost based my classification of the sessions according to religion according to the information given in the Program book on the presenters' own religion. I have not drawn conclusion of their religions from their names or academic work, as both names and field of study may give rise to misconceptions about their religions or faiths (a person with an Arab-sounding name is not necessarily Muslim, and a Christian may be a specialist on Buddhism). If the information on the presenter has not given an indication of his/her own religion, I have then classified the session according to its topic. If neither of these two criteria enabled me to categorise the session under one religion, I have in that case classified it as 'Unclear'.

If a session was held by one single presenter who treated the subject of two religions, I have classified the session according to the presenter's own religion (a session on Hinduism and Judaism presented by a Jew will be categorised as Jewish). If a session was held by several presenters from several religions, I have classified it as 'Mixed'.

In the category 'Unclear' I have put those sessions where it has been impossible to trace it to a religion. This may be because the information is too scarce, and because none of the key-terms (such as 'spirituality', 'God' etc.) are too vague to be connected to one religion. Looking at the information on the sessions I suspect a large percentage within this category may be classified as 'New Age', a very loose term describing a number of world-views where the adherents often are reluctant to be categorised at all (Hanegraaff 2002:249, 253).

In the category 'Non-Religious' I have put those sessions where no reference to anything spiritual/transcendent is present, and where the information about the presenters does not suggest any ties to a religion either.

The category 'Others' includes in 1993 and 2004 religions which were represented in very few sessions, such as Voodoo, Rastafari, Taoism, Shintoism, African Religion and Cao Dai. In 1999 the number of African Religion sessions increased, so it was therefore put as a category of its own.

Whether I have classified the sessions as performative or religious, I have followed the rule-of-thumb that *function+social/pragmatic concern=performance*. If the information on the session refers solely to theological or spiritual topics, I have classified it as functional. On the other hand, if there is mention of key-terms related to 'this-worldly' matters (such as 'ecology', 'racism', 'peace' etc.), I have classified it as performative. There are, however,

several problematic aspects of this approach. One can look at the functional/performative dichotomy as two opposites on a scale where there is a large grey area in between. The text describing the session may use only functional language, but with an underlying performative assumption of how the religion should be practically used. In addition, the session may in fact have had a performative focus, even if the information in the program does not show this.

Abbreviations

Chr.	Christianity
Hind.	Hinduism
Buddh.	Buddhism
Islam	Islam
Jud.	Judaism
Jain.	Jainism
New Age	New Age
Nat.Am.	Native American
Bah.	Bahai
Zor.	Zoroastrian
Sikh.	Sikhism
Theo./Anth.	Theosophy/Anthroposophy
Pag.	Paganism
Others	Voodoo, Rastafari, Taoism, Shintoism, Cao Dai (African Religion in 1999)
(Afr. Rel.	African Religion)
U.	Uncertain
N-R	Non-religious
Mixed	Mixed

STATISTICS OF THE PARLIAMENT OF THE WORLD'S RELIGIONS

1993, 1999 AND 2004

1. Parliament 1993: Sessions
2. Parliament 1993: Presenters
3. Parliament 1999: Sessions
4. Parliament 1999: Presenters
5. Parliament 2004: Sessions
6. Parliament 2004: Presenters

[illegible]

Other programs in 1993

Plenary sessions	11
'The Academy'	53
Conference on pluralism	15
Symposia	4
Performances	47
Pool Promenades	11
Video&Film festival	32
Total	173

2. Parliament of the World's Religions 1993: Presenters

	Chri.	Hind.	Buddh.	Islam	Jud.	Jain.	Nat.Am	New Age	Bah.	Zor.	Sikh.	Theo/Ant.	Pag.	Others	U.	N-R	Mixed	Total
Major presentations																		
Tuesday																		
USA	4	1			2				1	1			1		8		5	23
Western	2			1	1								1		1		1	7
Mixed		1	3	1						4	2				1	1	2	15
Indian	3	14		1		1					4		1		1	1		26
Non-Western																		
Unknown															2			2
Total	9	16	3	3	3	1			1	1	4	6	3		1	12	2	73
Thursday																		
USA	6	1		1	4						1		1		5			19
Western	2				1								1					4
Mixed	1			1						1	3							6
Indian		5	2			3				1	6							17
Non-Western		2	2	1														5
Unknown	1																	1
Total	10	8	4	3	5	3				2	10		2		5			52

Seminars & Lectures

Seminars & Lectures	Geography														Religion				Demographics			
	Chri.	Hind.	Buddh.	Islam	Jud.	Jain.	Nat.Am	New Age	Bah.	Zor.	Sikh.	Theo/Ant.	Pag.	Others	U.	R	Mixed	Total				
Tuesday																						
USA	38	2	3	2	2		19	5	2				6	2		17	2	19	119			
Western	2	1	1					2	1							4	2	1	14			
Mixed	1	5	3	28		3			2	2	8					2	1	2	57			
Indian		2		2		4					2					1			11			
Non-Western			3	8															11			
Unknown	2	1	2	2					1		2	1			1	3		1	16			
Total	43	11	12	42	2	7	19	7	6	2	12	7	2		1	27	5	23	228			

Total

Total number of Westerners (USA+Western):186

Total number of Mixed: 78

Total number of Indians: 54

Total number of Non-Western: 16

Total number of Unknown: 19

3. Parliament of the World's Religions 1999: Sessions according to religion

[illegible]

Parliament of the World's Religions 1999: Functional seminar and lectures

	Identity	Dialogue	Critical issues
Thursday	32/52 : 62%	16/31 : 51%	3/33 : 9%
Friday	45/62 : 72%	11/25 : 44%	0/31 : 0%
Saturday	36/53 : 68%	4/26 : 15%	1/37 : 3%
Sunday	47/56 : 84%	13/31 : 42%	2/30 : 7%
Monday	41/50 : 82%	13/27 : 48%	2/21 : 10%
Tuesday	43/56 : 77%	7/19 : 37%	2/16 : 13%
Wednesday	10/14 : 71%	7/12 : 58%	0/10 : 0%
Total	257/343	71/171	10/178
Average	F:74% P:26%	F:42% P:58%	F:6% P:96%
Total average	Functional:40%	Perf: 60%	

Other programs

Symposia	9
Performances	74
Film&Video	78
Next Generation	6
Plenary Sessions	7
Total	174

4. Parliament of the World's Religions 1999: Presenters

Major presentations	Chri.	Hind.	Buddh.	Islam	Jud.	Jain.	Nat.Am	New Age	Bah.	Zor.	Sikh.	Theo/Ant.	Pag.	Afr.rel.	Others	U.	N-R	Mixed	Total
USA	9			1	1		4	3								15	3	3	39
Western	9			1	4											7		1	22
Mixed 1	1	2	2	10		1				2	3					3		2	26
Indian		12	1	6		3				1	3								26
African	3								1					1		5		2	12
Mixed 2	2	1		5	1							1				1	2	2	15
Non-Western	1		1	7												2	1	1	13
Unknown	2			4						1						1	2		10
Total																			163
S&L Thursday																			
USA	16			1	2		6	2	2				3			9	1	13	55
Western	3	1														1	2	2	9
Mixed 1	3	3	2	3		1				1	1					5		8	27
Indian		4				7										1		1	13
African	4													1			2		7
Mixed 2	6	6	1	1	1									1	1	5	4	1	27
Non-Western				4			1							1		1		7	14
Unknown	5	1									1	1				7	1	4	20
Total																			172
Total	64	30	7	43	9	12	11	5	3	5	8	2	3	4	6	65	13	45	335

Total number of Westerners (USA+Western): 125

Total number of Mixed 1: 53

Total number of Indians: 39

Total number of Africans: 19

Total number of Mixed 2: 42

Total number of Non-Western: 27

Total number of Unknown: 30

5. Parliament of the World's Religions 2004: Sessions according to religion

Number of the members attending the sessions according to age																	
Sessions	Chr.	Hind.	Buddh.	Islam	Jud.	Jain.	Nat.Am.	New Age	Bah.	Zor.	Sikh.	Pag.	Others	U.	N-R	Mixed	Total
Thursday	14	1	3	4		3			1		4			2	8	2	18
Friday	9	1	3	6	2		2	1			1	1		2	9	5	17
Saturday	14	1	2	5	1	1	2			1	3	1		1	9	2	14
Sunday	8	1	2	6	1	3	3		1						14	1	19
Monday	8	1	2	3	2	2	3			1	2			1	17		15
Tuesday	13	2	1	4		3	1	1	2	1	4	1		1	18	1	7
Total	66	7	13	28	6	12	11	3	3	3	14	3		7	75	11	90
																	352

Functional/Performative according to category

Intrareligious

Performative 70/116 60 %

Functional 46/116 40 %

Interreligious

Total

Performative 78/120 65 % 240 Performative 68 %

Functional 42/120 35 % 112 Functional 32 %

Engagement

Performative 92/116 79 %

Functional 24/116 21 %

Other programs

Morning

observances 107

Performances 29

Film & video 16

Symposia 15

Exhibits & Art 21

Plenary sessions 7

Parl. Academy 8

Total 203

In addition there were sikh-activities, off-site programs, special receptions etc.

6. Parliament of the World's Religions 2004: Presenters

Sessions	Chri.	Hind.	Buddh.	Islam	Jud.	Jain.	Nat.Am	New Age	Bah.	Zor.	Sikh.	Pag.	Others	U.	N-R	Mixed	Total
Thursday																	
USA	17		1				4							8		39	69
Western	14	1	1	1										2	9	24	52
South-American	1															2	3
Mixed	1		2	10		5		1			11			2		17	49
Indian				1		2					5					2	10
Non-Western	2			2									2	1		6	13
Unknown	1			5							3			2		3	14
Tuesday																	
USA	12		1		1		2	2				3		25		10	56
Western	11								1					12	3	2	29
South-American								1									1
Mixed	2	3		9		5			1	1	6		1	1		6	35
Indian	1					1					10			1		4	17
Non-Western			3	6												8	17
Unknown														2		1	3
Total	62	4	8	34	1	13	6	4	2	1	35	3	3	56	12	124	368

Total number of Westerners (USA+West):206

Total number of South-Americans:4

Total number of Mixed:84

Total number of Indians:27

Total number of Non-Western: 30

Total number of Unknown:17

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ABSTRACT

The subject of the thesis is interreligious dialogues and cooperation examined from a sociological point of view: To obtain higher status in the international systems it is in the interest of the various religious traditions to cooperate and appear as a united system, since interreligious dialogues and cooperation can be used as an anti-secular strategy. There is today a great number of interreligious social agencies, institutions and organisations that work to improve the world through projects in developing countries, fight against violations of human rights, and focus on environmental issues. Against the background of the secular international society, it is very likely that these socially engaged activities also may be used as one way for religion to once again become a power to reckon with.

The thesis examines how religious adherents, on the basis of a common concern for humanitarian and ecological matters, can cooperate in an anti-secular agenda through an interreligious movement. One of the main points in this examination is to show how the partners engaged in these collaborations first and foremost are of the 'liberal' wings, and how the interreligious collaborations lack the participation of the 'conservative' wings. This absence shows the *intrareligious* difference. It is precisely the absence of intrareligious dialogues which may constitute the greatest challenge in the pursuit of the anti-secular goals and the wide support for the interreligious movement in general.

To discuss these topics the thesis analyses the *Parliament of the World's Religions* (in 1993, 1999 and 2004), which works as a reflection of the interreligious movement. At the Parliament in 1993 one of the paroles was 'No world peace without dialogue between the religions', but it is just as important to stress the 'dialogue *within* the religions'. In addition, the thesis shows how the organisationing of the events has become closely connected to certain anti-secular agencies which work towards an increased religious influence on the UN system, and how acts of religious exclusivism/fundamentalism may have influenced the programs of the Parliament.

The universalistic attitude promoted by the interreligious movement and the Parliament may be seen as expressions of Western ideas, since the majority of the participants have Western backgrounds. However, the intrareligious differences are not the result of cultural differences. For intrareligious dialogues between 'liberals' and 'conservatives' to work, a change from the essentialistic discourse to the processual discourse is required.